

UNIVERSITY CRISIS AND STUDENT PROTESTS IN AFRICA

THE 2005 -2006 UNIVERSITY STUDENTS' STRIKE IN CAMEROON



Edited by
FRANCIS B. NYAMNJOH, WALTER GAM NKWI
AND PIET KONINGS

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University Crisis and Student Protest in Africa: The 2005-2006 University Students' Strike in Cameroon

Edited By

**Francis B. Nyamnjo
Walter Gam Nkwi & Piet Konings**



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According to Achebe (1987:122), ‘the cock that crows in the morning belongs to one household but his voice is the property of the neighbourhood’. Similarly, in many Cameroonian communities, one person’s child is only in the womb. In other words although we might have written this work, many people and other sources contributed directly or indirectly to its realisation. It is our pleasure to acknowledge them. The most valuable and directly instrumental source of material for this book has been newspapers. Without these newspapers the writing of this book would have been as ‘effective as a storm in a tea cup’. We therefore thank all the journalists and those whose articles in one way or the other were found useful in these newspapers and have been elaborately cited here. Newspapers and journalists, chroniclers of everyday life in Cameroon, form the bedrock of this book. It is thanks to them, even as we cannot thank them enough, that future generations shall know the struggles by students and staffs of Cameroon’s universities to institute and consolidate excellence in teaching, research, publishing and community service or social responsiveness as cardinal values in the higher education system. In addition to the newspapers, we would like to express our gratitude to the critical insights of colleagues, fellow academics and peer reviewers. Their readings and corrections have given this book its present shape. Finally we remain grateful to those whose works have been cited here. References to all works are listed in the reference section of the book. For all errors of fact or interpretation, we alone are responsible.

Chapter 1

Irrepressible Dissent: The University as the Bedrock for Political Transformation in Cameroon

Introduction

This chapter provides an overview of the continental and national contexts of the crisis of higher education in Cameroonian State Universities, highlighting some of the critical factors that have served as impetus to student strikes.

It is somewhat surprising that there are still relatively few detailed studies on the role of students during economic and political liberalisation on the continent. The first section of this chapter clearly demonstrates the radicalising role of students during this era, manifest in their various protest actions against their deteriorating living and working conditions in higher education and against the authoritarian regimes in the universities and state. It focuses in particular on the University of Buea, Cameroon's only English-speaking university, where a striking number of students' strikes have taken place since its establishment in 1993. The second section explores a number of factors that have been almost completely ignored in the existing studies on student actions in Africa, including the increasing use of cell phones, the differences in gender roles, the religious dimensions of students' strikes and the importance of public spaces like bars and cafés for the planning and implantation of strike actions. It will be shown that these factors have actually played a significant role in student strikes in Cameroon. The third section provides a brief presentation of the research methodology as well as of the overall content and structure of the book.

African Universities at the Dawn of a new millennium

African universities are in deep crisis (see Lebeau & Ogunsanya 2000; Nyamnjoh & Jua 2002; Zeilig 2007). Academic standards have been falling rapidly because these universities lack the basic infrastructure needed to cope with the massive growth in the student population (Lebeau 1997; Konings 2002). The severe economic crisis and the implementation of structural

adjustment programmes (SAPs) are further aggravating the situation. The increasing withdrawal of state support for universities, university students and graduates can be seen in the drastic cuts in university budgets, the imposition of tuition fees and additional levies on the student population, and a virtual halt in the recruitment of new graduates in already over-sized state bureaucracies (Caffentzis 2000). Many graduates are finding themselves obliged to defer their entry into adulthood indefinitely as they are unable to achieve economic independence, marry and start a family of their own. They are also being forced to abandon their aspirations for elite status. And, last but not least, despite the current political liberalisation process, most African universities are continuing to operate under authoritarian management structures and political control that pose a severe threat to academic freedom and autonomy and impede lecturers and students from organising in defence of their interests and participating in university management.

Faced with this deepening crisis in their universities, students have started fighting for improvements in their living and study conditions and the introduction of a democratic culture in the universities and society as a whole, including the right to express their views, organise in student unions and participate in university management (Amutabi 2002; Konings 2002). While in the past, with a few exceptions, African student protest was sporadic, today it has become endemic in many countries, continuing year after year in spite of frequent university closures in what appears to have become protracted warfare. Federici and Caffentzis (2000: 115-50) have published a chronology of African university student struggles between 1985 and 1998 and this provides an impressive list of the violent confrontations between students and the forces of law and order in African states. As a result of increasing student activism, African governments have become inclined to treat students as if they were their countries' major enemies, turning campuses into war zones. Police intervention and the occupation of campuses by the security forces are now routine in many places and so is the presence of intelligence officers and police informants in class rooms (Federici 2000).

This book relates the spread in 1995 of a students' strike from the University of Yaoundé to the other state universities. However, it also focuses on the students' strike in the University of Buea (UB) in the South West Region of Anglophone Cameroon, which turned out to be particularly dramatic, resulting in the death of a few students and several injured. The UB

set up in 1993 in the wake of higher education reforms and based on the Anglo-Saxon educational system, is the country's only English-speaking university. The Presidential Decree establishing the UB raised Anglophone hopes that their university was going to enjoy a large measure of academic freedom and autonomy and would be endowed with a democratic management style. However, it soon turned out that the UB was not going to be any different from the other newly established universities that continued to be modelled on the Francophone university system with its excessive centralisation, authoritarian management style and political control (Jua & Nyamnjoh 2002; Awasom 2005). Given the fact that by the time the UB opened, the Anglophone region had become a hotbed of rebellion against the ruling regime (Takougang & Krieger 1998; Konings & Nyamnjoh 2003), the government was not keen to keep to the terms of the decree establishing the UB, preferring authoritarian to democratic governance so as to ensure political control and loyalty to the regime.

Evidence is provided in this book that most of the UB students' demands during the 2005 strike were similar to those of students in other Cameroonian and African universities, namely an improvement in their living and study conditions and the introduction of a democratic culture in the universities and society as a whole. What was peculiar to their strike actions, however, was their protest against the alleged marginalisation of Anglophones in general and Anglophone students in particular in the Francophone-dominated post-colonial state (Konings & Nyamnjoh 2003).

Konings (2005) has argued that Anglophone University students have tended to be more militant than their Francophone counterparts since reunification in 1961, feeling more marginalised and oppressed because of their Anglophone identity. They have actually played a vanguard role in the Anglophone struggle for the preservation of the Anglo-Saxon educational system and the creation of an English-language university. They also became strong supporters of the Anglophone clamour for autonomy either in the form of a return to the federal state or outright secession.

Similar to many other African countries, the 2005 UB student strike was marked by a high degree of violence. One reason for this was the regular failure of university and government officials to take students seriously and create effective channels of communication and negotiation. Many officials are suspicious of student unions and are hesitant about allowing students to unionise. In these circumstances, the use of violence is for students often the

only way of pressing home their grievances. Another reason for these violent strikes is that university and government officials are more inclined to solve student problems through repression than dialogue and peaceful negotiation. For the authorities, violence serves as a deterrent to the students from engaging in any similar 'irresponsible' behaviour but the provocative and brutal actions of the security forces have tended to fuel student violence.

The University of Buea

The University of Buea (UB) was born at a time of deepening economic and political crisis that affected the country as a whole and the system of higher education in particular from the mid-1980s onwards. Until 1993, there was only one university in Cameroon, the University of Yaoundé, which had been set up in 1962. Though officially a bilingual institution, the University of Yaoundé clearly remained a Francophone institute. Not only was it based on the French university system but courses were mainly given in French, thus putting English-speaking students at a disadvantage (Konings 2002, 2005; Awasom 2005).

The administrative structure of the university was modelled on the French tradition with its excessive centralisation, and it became almost a replica of the one-party system initiated in 1966. The university's administration appeared to be predominantly geared towards political control with, for example, national security agents, disguised as students, spying on both students and lecturers. There was no clear separation between politics and academics. All appointments at the university, from the rector to messengers and cleaners, were political appointments and for a university career, loyalty to the regime was more important than intellectual merit (Nyamnjoh 1999). The university was administered in an authoritarian manner with little dialogue between the university authorities and the academic staff and students. Unlike in some other West and Central African states (Konings 2004a), lecturers and students were not allowed to organise in defence of their interests. The so-called student delegates or representatives – those responsible for imposing the decisions of the university authorities on students while taking note of those who complained (Dibussi 1991: 16; Mbu 1993: 107) – were not elected by students after 1986 but instead were appointed by the administration. Worse still, they tended to become informants who pointed out subversives to the regime in times of

crisis. A lack of participation in university affairs created the impression among students that strikes were the only avenue to change in the university.

By 1990, there were explosive problems in higher education. The number of students had increased from 35 in 1962 to 10,000 in 1982 and 41,000 by 1990 (Mehler 1998: 59; Mbu 1993: 82) but the university infrastructure was only able to cope with at most 7,000 students. Lecture rooms, libraries, laboratories and office space for lecturers were inadequate and lacked the necessary equipment. And the university hostel could only offer accommodation to a limited number of students. So students were forced to rent rooms at exorbitant prices in the so-called mini-cities around the university. These problems were compounded by the deepening economic crisis characterised by a depleted state treasury, the late and irregular payment of student bursaries and staff salaries, and a low rate of execution of the university budget. During the political liberalisation process, which started in 1990, students and lecturers began to organise in autonomous unions. Besides trying to represent and defend their members' interests, these unions also demanded the implementation of democratic reforms at the university and in society as a whole (Konings 2002; 2004a).

To help solve the university crisis, the government eventually decided to decentralise university education, against the advice of the World Bank, which strongly discouraged the creation of new tertiary educational institutions during structural adjustment. Presidential Decree no. 93/026 of 19 January 1993, which launched a number of higher education reforms, established six state universities in different regional centres and spelled out their governance structures and regulations (Njeuma *et al.* 1999). Four were to be bilingual: the University of Yaoundé I (Centre Region), the University of Yaoundé II (Centre Region), the University of Douala (Littoral Region) and the University of Dschang (West Region). Of the two remaining universities, the University of Ngaoundere (Adamawa Region) was to be a French-speaking institution and the University of Buea (South West Region) was to be English-speaking. In an apparent attempt to meet the World Bank's cost-saving demands in higher education, the decree eliminated state bursaries to students and demanded that students pay annual tuition fees of FCFA 50,000.

Significantly, the Presidential Decree stipulated that the UB's governance structure would be unique in the sense that it would be based on Anglo-Saxon traditions and values. In sharp contrast to the newly established

universities in Francophone Cameroon, the UB was therefore to enjoy the freedom to elect its principal officers from the Vice-Chancellor to the Heads of Department and to determine its academic orientation without overbearing government interference (Awasom 2005). It is widely believed in Anglophone Cameroon that the creation of an Anglo-Saxon university in Buea, with a relatively large measure of autonomy and democratic governance, was one of the Francophone-dominated regime's main strategies to placate Anglophones and gain admission to the Commonwealth of Nations.

However, it soon became evident that the regime did not intend to implement the regulations in the Presidential Decree and establish an alternative university system in Anglophone Cameroon. In fact, as a result of widespread opposition in Anglophone Cameroon to the regime in power, the government became more interested in introducing the Francophone university system of authoritarian governance and political control into the UB than the Anglo-Saxon university system of democratic governance and academic freedom and autonomy.

By 1990 widespread popular discontent with the ruling regime could be observed in Anglophone Cameroon. The majority of the Anglophone population held the corrupt, authoritarian regime responsible for the severe economic crisis and the draconian structural adjustment measures, resulting in a loss of its legitimacy. Taking advantage of widespread Anglophone resentment of their allegedly second-rate citizenship in the Francophone-dominated unitary state, John Fru Ndi, a charismatic Anglophone leader, launched the first opposition party, the Social Democratic Front (SDF), in Bamenda, the capital of the North West Region in Anglophone Cameroon in May 1990. The SDF quickly became the country's major opposition party, extending its influence from Anglophone Cameroon to many parts of Francophone Cameroon (Konings 2004b). The year the UB was established was also the start of political organisation and agitation in Anglophone Cameroon for constitutional reforms. Newly created Anglophone nationalist movements began to demand first a return to the federal state and later outright secession (Konings & Nyamnjoh 2003). The so-called Southern Cameroons National Congress (SCNC) became the spearhead of the Anglophone strive for an independent Anglophone state. Moreover, the Anglo-Saxon UB was unsurprisingly going to be hit by similar problems as

other state universities during the continuing economic crisis and economic liberalisation.

As the World Bank had previously warned, the 1993 university reforms created serious problems concerning the funding of basic infrastructure to match the surging enrolment levels at the six newly created state universities. As in the other state universities, UB students and teachers were dissatisfied with their deteriorating living and working conditions. Students vehemently opposed some of the 1993 university reform measures, in particular the abolition of scholarships and the introduction of tuition fees. Besides a heavy workload, teachers faced financial problems: there were regular delays in the payment of their salaries and, even worse, incomes were dramatically affected when, in 1993, there was a drastic 60-70% cut in civil servants' pay, followed by a 50% devaluation of the CFA Franc in January 1994.

Besides these general problems facing university education in Cameroon, there were still some specific problems in the UB which tended to aggravate the situation. First, the UB was located on the campus of the Advanced School of Translation and Interpretation (ASTI) which was opened in 1985 to accommodate less than 1,500 students. When it was transformed into a full-fledged university in 1993 no new infrastructure was erected to entertain the exploding student numbers. As at 2005 the UB had a population of over 8,500 students with no substantial infrastructural expansion. Although some lecture halls like AMPHI 750 have been added, they hardly keep pace with the growing student number. As a result, lecture halls remained crammed. The lack of office space for the teaching staff as well as classroom space and modern research facilities also tend to create problems.

Second, although the UB was created as an 'Anglo-Saxon' university to satisfy the Anglophones as a whole, it has actually been plagued by the existing ethno-regional conflicts in the Anglophone region. These conflicts reflect the growing divide between the coastal-forest region, the present South West Region, and the inland savannah area (Grassfields), the present North West Region. Since the end of the British Trusteeship era, South Westerners feel increasingly dominated by the North Westerners economically and politically (Konings & Nyamnjoh 2003). The UB is actually located in the Bakweri region of the South West Region of Anglophone Cameroon. Unsurprisingly, South Westerners in general and the Bakweri in particular tend to look upon the UB as 'their' university – a tendency that has been strengthened by the fact that the UB has been headed by members of

the Bakweri elite. The latter have used all means possible to maintain control over the predominantly northwestern students and lecturers. Almost three quarters of the UB students and lecturers originate from the North West Region and they are likely to be seen as a severe threat to the 'autochthonous' power position.

In its determined efforts to establish control over any form of opposition at the newly created UB, the regime did not hesitate to violate the provisions of the Presidential Decree establishing the UB by appointing all the principal university officials and making their tenure of office indefinite. The first Vice-Chancellor (VC) was Dr Dorothy Limunga Njeuma who belonged to the local Bakweri ethnic group and was a member of the Political Bureau of the ruling party, the Cameroon People's Democratic Movement (CPDM), and a former Vice-Minister of National Education. According to the Presidential Decree, the VC was supposed to be appointed for a fixed tenure of four years (which could be renewed once) and from among members of the 'professorial rank of Anglo-Saxon training following recommendation of the UB Senate and Council'. Contrary to these provisions, Dr Njeuma was an associate professor who was appointed by the regime without any recommendation from the university's Senate and Council and her tenure of office turned out to be indefinite since she was still the UB's VC in 2005 (Jua & Nyamnjoh 2002, Awasom 2005).

In her characteristically authoritarian style of governance, Dr Njeuma started to police the production of critical scholarship, intimidate and persecute members of opposition parties and organisations, and crush student and teachers' unions (Jua & Nyamnjoh 2002; Schmidt-Soltau 1999). The right of students to form unions and go on strike was recognised under the 1990 political liberalisation legislation and, as a result, the UB authorities allowed a students' union, the so-called University of Buea Students' Union (UBSU), to operate on campus. During the 1993-1995 period however, the UBSU staged a number of strikes to try to safeguard student rights and in protest against the UB administration's attempts to raise tuition fees. The UB authorities reacted by taking a series of punitive measures. Firstly, following the initial student strike in 1993, Dr Njeuma ordered students and their parents to sign an undertaking never to indulge in strike actions. Secondly, student leaders were dismissed from the university and refused admission to any state university in Cameroon. Strikingly, a number of these dismissed student leaders, like Ebenezer Akwanga, formed the very militant

Anglophone nationalist movement in 1995, the Southern Cameroons Youth League (SCYL), with the aim of achieving an independent Anglophone state through armed struggle (Konings 2005). And thirdly, the UBSU was banned from the UB in 1995. Subsequently, the UB authorities introduced what the teachers' union later described as a 'compartmentalised, dependent and ineffective faculty representation of students' (Synes, UB Branch 2005a). These student faculty representatives tended to be seen by the student population as part of the existing political control system within the university.

During Dr Njeuma's time in office, the UB administration was equally hostile towards the local branch of the university teachers' union, the *Syndicat des Enseignants du Supérieur* (SYNES) that was founded in June 1991 as the first autonomous trade union in the Cameroonian public service (Konings 2004a). The SYNES was subject to severe government repression until 1997 on the pretext that civil servants were legally prohibited from forming trade unions. But even after eventual government recognition of the union, Dr Njeuma continued to stymie SYNES activities as well as intimidate and punish local branch leaders and members, even dismissing some assistant lecturers for being members of SYNES. Consequently, throughout the era of Dr. Njeuma, SYNES survived in 'the cold'.

Dr Njeuma succeeded in establishing a large measure of control over the university community for a considerable period of time by effectively using the carrot and stick method but in 2005 UB students began to revolt against their unsatisfactory living and working conditions and the university authorities' authoritarian governance style. To achieve their goals, they demanded recognition of the revived students' union and the removal of Dr Njeuma as the VC of the university as one of their grievances.

The 2005 UB Students' Strike

On 27 April 2005, UB students joined the strike action initiated by their colleagues in Cameroon's oldest university, the University of Yaoundé I. Since the start of the political liberalisation process in the early 1990s, students at the University of Yaoundé had been organising into unions in an attempt to improve their living and working conditions and promote a democratic culture in the university and society as a whole. This led them into a series of violent confrontations with the forces of law and order and

the newly created ethnic militia that were closely allied to the regime in power (Konings 2002).

When these strike actions failed to deliver the students' most essential demands, a few University of Yaoundé students decided to change tactics and, advocating non-violent actions, went on hunger strike. The first hunger strike began on 29 September 2004, less than two weeks before the 11 October presidential elections. A tiny group of five students that was to call itself the *Association pour la défense des droits des étudiants du Cameroun* (ADDEC), led by Mouaffo Djontu, resorted to this extreme form of action with a view to bringing pressure to bear on presidential hopefuls to commit themselves to an improvement in student conditions if elected. In a document entitled 'Five Points of the Cameroonians Students' Rights Association on the Plight of Students to the Political Elite', ADDEC called for the formulation of a student status, the withdrawal of the FCFA 50,000 tuition fee, the re-introduction of scholarships (at least for research students), the election of rectors, deans and other university officials, and the creation of a national body to oversee competitive government examinations. This first hunger strike was simply ignored by the political elite.

Six months later, on 13 April 2005, the same group embarked on a second hunger strike after having written an open letter to the Head of State in which they raised similar grievances and equally called for better conditions for studying, of assessment, accommodation and food. Although the government and university authorities continued to ignore their demands, growing sympathy could be observed for the hunger strikers among the student community. On 20 April, a group of sympathisers went on strike over specific grievances, in particular the provision of drinking water and better toilets. They were soon joined by other students who were shocked by the university rector's allegation that the strikers were non-students who were pursuing a political agenda. Almost the whole student population took to the streets, blocking the traffic and defying heavily armed troops after the government-controlled radio and television stations started broadcasting provocative statements. In response to the ADDEC leadership's appeal, they tried to avoid violence. Desperate attempts by the government to break the strike by giving fake student leaders an opportunity on television to strongly condemn and call off the strike did not have the desired effect. When the government finally realised that the strike could only be ended by peaceful negotiation, it had already moved beyond the confines of the University of

Yaoundé I (Arranz 2005). By the end of April, students in five of the six state universities were on strike, the only exception being students at the University of Ngaoundere.

On 27 April, UB students joined their striking colleagues in Yaoundé on what they termed a ‘solidarity strike’. In sharp contrast to the strike at the University of Yaoundé I, the strike at the UB rapidly took on a violent character. It was initially more or less spontaneous but lacked any effective leadership and coordination because of the absence of a real students’ union that could have controlled its membership, represented its interests and entered into peaceful negotiations with the university authorities. The existing body of student representatives from the various UB faculties lacked legitimacy and confidence among the student community and played no role in the strike. The chairperson of the college of presidents of student representatives, Elvis Damsi, even confessed that the strike started without his knowledge and that the strikers refused to tell him why they had gone on strike, accusing him and his colleagues of being spies for the university authorities. A second reason for the outbreak of violence was that the authoritarian university and government officials lacked the necessary tact and patience to manage the strike. Their attempts to crush the strike and their repeated refusal to enter into peaceful negotiations had the unintended effect of prolonging the strike and fuelling student violence. The provocative and brutal behaviour of the forces of law and order also encouraged the students’ violent response.

This book documents this UB strike. It narrates the various actions that took place, the reactions of the main agencies involved in the strike, and the comments from the wider public. We use specifically, newspaper sources most of the time citing the reports as they were. Yet we are also aware of the shortcomings of the newspaper reports and what the reporters failed to take into account. The significance of this approach and to the book in general rests on the fact that, the intensity and ramifications of the students’ strike in 2005/2006 surpasses by far all the other students’ strikes which Cameroon had witnessed since the institution of university education. The documentation of newspaper reports is done to preserve the narratives on the strike for posterity and to give the book a wider audience beyond Cameroon and Africa. Above all the book adds to burgeoning literature on African Universities.

That notwithstanding, the book pays particular attention to certain elements that have been of great significance in the UB strike but are often overlooked in narratives of other student strike actions in Africa: the use of cell phones, the gender dimension, religion, bars and cafés, and the power of the photocopier.

The Cell Phone

As at 2005 the cell phone was barely six years old in Cameroon and Buea. Yet the use and creativity by students was amazing and fascinating. To understand the specific form the cell phone has taken in this triangular country, we should also consider changes in economic and social relations in the Cameroonian society. Today, the economy is depicted as one of uncertainty (Mbembe 2001); as it is an economy structured around uncertainties in daily life where people never know what will happen tomorrow and their lives are being shaped around the social and economic insecurities they face (see de Bruijn & van Dijk 1995). This specific economic form appeared during the economic downturn which stroke Africa and Cameroon in the late 1980s and early 1990s. As a result the currency was devalued, salaries were slashed three times and the Structural Adjustment Programme (SAP) aggravated and embittered the situation. With the introduction of the SAP as a palliative to cure the ailing economy, some of the telecommunication structures were privatised in the late 1980s and later. For instance, in 1998, the Cameroon Telecommunication Company (Camtel) was established by bringing together Intelcom and the Department of Telecommunications at the Ministry of Post and Telecommunications. The Cameroon Telecommunication Mobile Company (Camtel Mobile) was set up with the specific task of installing and exploiting mobile phones across the whole country and, according to Nyamnjoh (2005:209), with this initiative:

Private investors such as Mobilis or Orange and MTN-Cameroon have since extended and improved upon the telecommunications services. From a fixed telephone network of around 87,000 subscribers since independence, Cameroon now boasts more than 200,000 cell phone subscribers for MTN Cameroon alone.

The literature on the use of cell phones is replete. In Africa, in particular, the rapid pace of adoption has garnered particular attention from many

scholars (see Souter *et al.* 2005; Meso, Musa, & Mbarika 2005; James & Versteeg 2007; Carmody 2009). Those who first got the phones were the elites but later on it became cheaper as pre-paid was accessible to many (Rogers 2003) Researchers looking beyond adoption reveal adaptive uses in rural/urban situations occasioned by men and women. Lacking not only landlines but also constrained in terms of economics and infrastructure, both men and women have developed ingenious, creative and adaptive usage patterns, ‘flashing’ ‘beeping’ recipients, sharing handsets, and other ways of ‘using without spending’. In Burkina Faso, for instance, Hahn & Kibora (2008) have carried out intensive work in that direction. Other readings suggest that such creative appropriations perhaps started with small businesspeople and whether it was in urban Rwanda (Donner 2006b) or Nigeria (Jagun, Heeks & Whalley 2008) the situation has not been very different. These users are new actors in complex socio-technical systems (i.e. Beijer *et al.* 1987) helping to shape the very technology they use (Oudshoorn & Pinch 2007).

Class and gender elsewhere has also interacted to configure adoption, attitudes, and significance of the cell phones (Wajcman 1991, 2004 and 2007). Consequently, mobile phone appropriation and benefits are similarly not expected to be gender impartial.

Research into the mobile phone use in the developing world, especially in rural Africa, is also beginning to reveal a similarly complex, nuanced picture of access, usage patterns and impacts on populations across the globe. Some of the limited research so far reveals market women in southern Nigeria using cell phones to aid their business (Jagun *et al.* 2007). The literature also reveals a complex and gendered disparity in access. Examining seventeen African countries, Gillwald *et al.* (2010) finds that in thirteen countries, more men than women own phones and, of those who own phone, men spend more on average than women. Abraham (2008) documents two class of women phone owners: those with airtime and ‘underprivileged users’ who are voiceless. Comfort and Dada (2008) argue that ICT has a social status that tends to emphasise existing gender inequalities. Wakunuma (2007) finds that mobile phones aggravate existing poor/rich gap in Zambia. Comfort and Dada (2008) report that Nigerian women and men find mobile phones a ‘mixed blessing’, are bringing a sense of control but at a price. Scott *et al.* (2004) find women in Uganda have less access to mobile phones than men but the reverse in Ghana. Cameroon has benefitted very little from such

studies as demonstrated above yet the creative appropriation of the cell phone is much the same and even sometimes surpasses. Nkwi (2009: 50-68) generally handles the history of telephone in Buea, a University City town where women played out their rule in 'call boxes'. Nyamnjoh (2005: 209) opines that "...the cell phone has become like the long arm of the village leadership, capable of reaching even the most distant 'sons and daughters of the soil' trapped in urban spaces...." He further maintains that the cell phone has been creatively used by rural/urban relations to stay in touch with kin and kith. These few but very scant studies by any standard show the poverty of studies done on cell phone in Cameroon with regards to the gender roles.

The Cell Phone and the Strike

Any casual observation shows that those who appropriate any form of technology first are always the youths. During the university students' strike the cell phone technology was appropriated by students in many meaningful and creative ways. Student leaders and executives made phone ownership mandatory for easy communication. They easily sent SMS or Short Message Service to their colleagues when there was not much money to make a complete call. These messages were either to indicate that the police were searching for them, make an appointment for a meeting place or strategize on the next step that will be communicated to the student body. Interviews with actors and actresses and observation indicate that the strength of the phone enabled the students to hold on strongly to their will power than it would have been otherwise. The administration was circumvented most of the time by the student union executives by only using the phone. They could locate the position of each of their colleagues and although they could be separated in order to escape the police or gendarmes they were however united through the power of the phone. In order for the administration to dialogue meaningfully with the students they had to resort to getting the phone numbers of the students' union executives. It was because of the way the cell phone was used by the students that the police resorted to intimidating the students and taking away their phones. Many students complained aloud that their phones had been seized by the police. Georgiana, a third year student of chemistry graphically put the way her phone was seized in the following words: "Three policemen forced themselves into my room and each was having a pistol. The first thing they asked was my phone. When I handed over the phone they removed the SIM

card and destroyed it right under my eyes”. Many complain like that of Georgiana was rife. Unfortunately, any attempt to talk to the police in order to know their version has ended up in “smoke”.

The power of the cell phone technology was closely followed by other technologies such as the fax machines and photocopiers around the university locations. That facilitated the strike in multiple ways. In all the state universities, the photocopy and fax machines are found around the universities location. This initially was meant for the students to Xerox both textbooks which they cannot afford to buy and sometimes notes for students who were either not in class for one reason or the other. During the strike many tracks which the various students’ unions printed were quickly photocopied and made available to the students’ body. Yet the history of these technologies goes beyond 2005 when the student insurrections took place. It was used in the 1990s by the opposition which was not wanted by the authoritarian regime of Paul Biya. According to Nyamnjoh (2005: 207-208):

In the late 1980s, and early 1990s, photocopiers and fax machines allowed the budding opposition and civil society organisations to bypass censorship - especially since the Yondo Black affair and the controversial launching of the Social Democratic Front (SDF) party. In 1992, when a state of emergency was decreed in Bamenda and John Fru Ndi of the SDF was placed under house arrest for contesting the presidential election results, his party relied heavily on fax machines and photocopiers...

During the 2005 the ‘dissident students’ as they came to be branded by the administration also found themselves in similar situations like the SDF and the fax as well as the photocopy machines facilitated the dissemination of vital information. If the power of the phone, fax and photocopier helped the students to hold on to the fort, the gender aspect of the strike was more revealing.

Female Students in the Strike

Women and/or girls have always been noted for their role in liberation struggles in various societies. For instance, during the 1789 French Revolution it was women who marched to the Versailles palace to fight for the reduction of the price of bread which was the main staple diet of the

French society but whose price was too high to be afforded by ordinary people. In Africa Lyons (1997) has carried out research on the role of women in the Zimbabwean war of liberation. Women were voluntarily recruited, camped, trained and fought alongside with their male counterparts. During the Algerian War of Liberation women were very active. De Groot *et al.* (2000: 247) maintained that women fulfilled a number of different functions during the Algerian war and many were Muslims who supported the National Liberation Front (NFL). The French on the other hand employed the services of women. In all the total number of women was estimated at 11,000. (For more on the role of women in the war, see, Lazreg 1994; Turshen 2002).

In the university strikes in Cameroon girls were at the forefront and from the beginning were not just dormant observers. They played various roles to supplement and compliment their boy colleagues. Dressed mostly in jeans and t-shirts the female students were responsible for the carrying of stones (the only weapons in the hands of the students) which were given to their boy colleagues to fight the well-armed gendarmes and the police.

They also played the role of spies, just like women in the Algerian war (Turshen 2002: 890). From the innocents and charming looks of some of the female students they were able to loiter around the gendarmes and police unhurt and thereby picking up very valuable information. This information was in turn passed unto the students who will then best know how to strategize and attack their foes.

With the intensification of dropping tear gas and its nauseating affects the female students were the first to develop anti-anecdotes. This constituted towels soaked in cold water and placed on the outer nasal organs. Constantly when the tear gas was dropped they were the ones who immediately rushed for water and towels for their male friends to neutralise it. Above all, the female students who were mostly conscious of God and thus introduced the religious dimension of the whole strike period. The university amongst all the state universities took the lead in that direction.

The Religious Dimensions of the Strike

The introduction of the colonial church in Africa in the 19th century brought about tremendous changes. The literature on this subject is relatively abundant and describes the changes in relation to conversion of people. For instance, Ajayi (1982), writing on Eastern Nigeria contends that the Christian

church eventually produced new men through their conversion. The work therefore relates to social change including new social groups and status in society. Markowitz (1973) studied the Congo and reached the same conclusion. Fields (1982) undertook studies in Zambia and concluded that the western church and missionary effort to abolish 'paganism' failed. According to him, the intention of Christianity to convert Africans to the new beliefs did not completely transform them. Even if it did, in some quarters, it was temporary because the indigenes later more or less returned to their traditional mores. Fields concludes that Christianity provided Africans with principled grounds for denying customary obligations such as arranged marriages and communal labour. Ndi (1990) studied the Mill Hill Missionaries in Southern Cameroon, and concluded that the church did a lot in the formation of the educated elites who were ready to take up positions in the British colonial administration.

In the last decades of the 20th Century and the beginning of the 21st Century there was an unprecedented economic blizzard that blew across most African countries including Cameroon. This partially led to the formation of many churches apart from the main stream ones –Roman Catholic, Presbyterian and Baptist. There were many other factors for this proliferation which had been handled elsewhere, (see Corton & Marshall 2001; Gifford 1992, 1994, 1998; Marshall 1992; and van Dijk 2000). Akoko (2007) did a thorough and excellent work on the influx of what he called Pentecostal churches in Buea and rightly attributes these churches to the economic squeeze which brought untold hardship to the economy. It will appear that in Buea the mushrooming of these churches has reached a fever heat point with more than fifty types of churches with all and sundry searching for salvation after dead. The students, especially the Buea students, were conscious of God in their liberation and also because they felt that the compound was under a magical spell placed there by the Vice Chancellor whom they wanted to place on the run. It was on that backdrop that they gave religious nomenclature to certain toponyms along the university corridor. For instance there was Nazareth, Bethlehem and Jerusalem.

Nazareth was the place where the students believe that the charms were planted by the vice-chancellor along the main stream entering the university and under the main notice board. There was always fresh grass under that notice board and was constantly subjected to watering and clearing. One would have thought that it was meant to keep the environment clean, but at

the same time what was suspicious was the fact that there times which the surroundings of the place was untidy but that one was always clean. Time without number the gendarmes and the police under the instructions of the administration were asked to disperse the students.

When the students could no longer bore the harassment from the gendarmes on that spot they decided to make a hell out of Nazareth, and following their biblical knowledge they found the new site known and called it Bethlehem. Many of the students during our discussions with them reveal that it was called thus, because it was there that many strategies were born.

The last religious site was Jerusalem. It was there that they decided to enter the university campus and meet the minister of Higher Education, Jacques Fame Ndongho who had come from Yaounde to end the strike. On entering the campus they were again chanting religious songs 'Holy Ghost Fire Striking, Holy Ghost Fire Striking' (3x). This song was repeated till the students arrived at the open AMPHI theatre where they had discussions with the minister. That song was a reflection and at the same time symbolised the depth of Pentecostalism in Buea.

Bars and Cafés

Bars and cafés constituted areas of free discussions and planning of strategies. They were what Jurgen Habermas referred to as public spheres. Awasom (2010: 204) sees "public spheres as areas in social life where people congregate and freely discuss and identify societal problems and, through such discussion, influence public opinion and, inadvertently, politics. It is the sphere of private people who come together to constitute a public and engage in debates over general issues in the basically privatised but publicly relevant sphere...." Point taken. The mushrooming of bars and cyber cafes in the university neighbourhoods represented such public spaces where the students met to discuss the strike actions. Although bars operated at minimal hours because of fear of insecurity due to students cyber cafes played more a prominent action.

Methodology

According to Thomas (2002: 272), "the importance and significance of methodology lies in the fact that the issue of what is studied is intimately

connected with the question of how it is studied”. This book has taken us almost a whole decade. As already stated we have made use of the newspapers which covered the strike for the length of time as the strike lasted. The articles in the newspapers are followed by our commentaries and in certain areas our critical analysis. Participant observation is was also one of the most used methods especially in the section of the post-strike section. Also talking and talking to people and students help us to gather much of the narratives and this determined us to authenticate the newspaper narratives. In his piece “Fishing in Troubles Waters: Disquettes and Thiofs in Dakar”, Nyamnjoh observed that one of the fieldwork methods which he used was talking and interacting with people. He wrote:

The ethnography used in this paper has been harvested as I went along, propelled by a fascination with the theme in question and a background of similar interests pursued among students and youth elsewhere in Cameroon and Botswana. Over twenty-five years of research have taught me this: if you are passionate about a theme and have a way with people, rich ethnographic insights flow your way through interactions with others anywhere, anytime. One is always doing fieldwork, even when not formally in the field. While confining social research to formal field situations might yield ‘hard facts’, it detracts from those realities that may not immediately fit our practised instruments and scholarly *manière de faire* (Nyamnjoh 2005: 297-298)

We realised that the more one talked with people about the work, the more it was enriched and the more the researcher was also directed to other people. But one of the people whom we have not been able to talk to because they always felt that they had ‘skeleton in their cupboards’ were the police and gendarmes who participated in the strike with the objective of maintaining law and order, yet appeared to have committed more atrocities that shocked the community.

That notwithstanding, we used a plethora of secondary literature. This was often announced by the type of themes that cropped up while we were at the same time dealing with the newspapers.

The Structure of the Book

In addition to Chapter Two, which reproduces an earlier scholarly article by Ntantang Jua and Francis Nyamnjoh, on scholarship production and recession in higher education in Cameroon, this book assembles data from newspaper reports, diaries and running commentaries that emanated from the strikes, beginning with the strike that enveloped the University of Yaoundé. These reports capture the actors involved in the strike, and their interests and positions taken during the course of the strike action. It also provides snippets into the strategic evolution of tactical collective action choices made by the ADDEC leadership when faced with opposition from the more powerful university and governmental authorities. Meanwhile the running comments provide representative insights into the sentiments expressed on different websites – sentiments which captured a global Cameroonian reality.

Chapter three opens up with the second front in the university protests in Cameroon, with the University of Buea Student's Union joining the strike action in solidarity with their peers in Yaoundé. While opinions differed as to the rationale for solidarity strike action, the case of the University of Buea present a number of open ulcers from previous contestations which provided fodder for mobilisation and further contestation. It also pointed to broader problems within Cameroonian higher education which were refracted to Buea through the University of Yaoundé.

While strike action in the University of Yaoundé was relatively peaceful, in the University of Buea, things quickly went out of hand with the introduction of the forces of law and order unto the university campus. Hence, chapter three paints the portrait of destruction and loss of life which characterised the strike action in the University of Buea. In vivid commentary and emotional running commentary, divergent views are expressed on the interpretations of the confrontation between the Cameroonian police and striking students.

The hurricane of violence which enveloped the University of Buea then spread to the Universities of Douala and Dschang. Though kicking off to a timid start in Douala and Dschang, Chapter Five describes the arrest of protesting university students in Douala as well as the evolution of the strike in Dschang.

Meanwhile Chapter Six narrates the escalation of violence and the loss of life and property which resulted from the student protests at the University of Buea. Through almost instantaneous commentary, the escalation of violence at the UB was broadcast to the international community by way of internet. Articles were complemented by vivid portraits of carnage wrought by violence.

Chapter Seven opens up with negotiations to end the strike in Yaoundé. News stories trace the positioning of the actors involved in negotiating an end to the strike action and a return normalcy to higher education in Cameroon. As the tension is defused in Yaounde though, the strike continues in the other public universities around the country. Meanwhile, in the resolution of the positional dichotomies between the actors there is evidence of loose ends which are bound to re-ignite conflict in the future, thereby confirming the fact that public universities in Cameroon are reflective of a society grappling with latent crises?

While the road to peace in Yaoundé was paved in finesse, the road to an untenable peace in Buea remained bumpy, given the infusion of personality differences into the entire process. Chapter Eight traces the road to peace marred by a mix of local and governmental authorities. Meanwhile it also evidences a number of setbacks on account of the University of Buea administration putting itself on a collision course with the nascent students' union around issues of recognition of the union, the scheduling of semester examinations post-strike and the annulment of the university convocation. Within the narratives provided by newspaper accounts, it is possible to glean the infusion of personality conflicts into the shaping of the rivalry between the University of Buea administration and the protesting students. The strike does not end with the signing of an accord between the University of Buea Students' Union and the Minister of Higher Education.

Given broader societal implications of a university strike in Cameroon, civil society organisations often express their perspectives on the actor and process dynamics underpinning the strike. These views, represented in Chapter Nine elaborate extra-university opinions on issues ranging from the use of force on unarmed students to the Anglophone problem in Cameroon.

Meanwhile Chapter Ten represents an epilogue to the strike action. It presents a number of articles which take stock of the strike as well as the actors involved. It ends with the consequences of the strike action which amongst others was the replacement of the Vice Chancellor of the University

of Buea. The chapter goes beyond and examines the atmosphere at the state universities, paying close attention to the University of Buea, following the end of the strike six years ago.

Conclusion

This brief chapter has hopefully prepared the reader for what the book is all about. It has shown in a way the causes of the strike, and how the strike was facilitated by the cell phone and other information and communication gadgets. The proliferation of religious sects around the university was as well appropriated by the students.

The chapter has shown that the recent violent student strikes in Cameroon in general and at the University of Buea in particular were first and foremost an expression of widespread student unrest and protest in Africa in an era of economic and political liberalisation. Having become frustrated by the dramatic deterioration in their living and working conditions and the lack of democratic space within and outside the university, university students had come to see strike action as the only way to demonstrate their grievances to the authoritarian government of Cameroon and the university authorities.

The next chapter begins with the production of scholarship in Cameroon, a paper written by Nantang B. Jua and Francis B. Nymanjoh. The reproduction of this paper here helps situate historically, politically and intellectually the specific strikes that are the focus of this book.

Chapter 2

Scholarship Production in Cameroon: Interrogating a Recession¹

Nantang B. Jua and Francis B. Nyamnjoh

Editors' Note

This chapter amongst other things examines the university system in Cameroon. It starts by generally showing a panoramic picture of African universities and proceeds to draw on the fact that the university system in Cameroon is not separated from the politics of the state. The state's voice weighs quite heavily on university administration and policies. From vice-chancellors down to heads of departments, everyone owes their position not to an election or endorsement by peers, but to a direct appointment by the President of the country, with or without recommendation by the Minister of Higher Education. This approach, which takes decision-making out of the hands of peers into the hands of politicians, makes it abundantly clear where the loyalties of everyone appointed should lie.

This chapter is based on an earlier paper published in 2002 by Ben Jua Nantang and Francis Nyamnjoh. It is reproduced here to make a case that the present crises in higher education in the country goes back a long way, and that the basic causes remain the same. As Jua and Nyamnjoh argue below, Cameroonians saw a positive correlation between the enactment of the Liberty Laws in the early 1990s, the increase in the number of tertiary institutions, and the contribution of its universities to worldwide intellectual endeavours. Nevertheless, as the history of the University of Buea shows, the university space, instead of becoming free, became instead a space of domination. Universities discourage critical scholarship and collaboration, harass politically suspect instructors, and put barriers in the way of professional advancement. For most faculty members, energy in the university space has become focused on survival, with many individuals more

¹ First published in *African Studies Review*, Volume 45, Number 2 (September 2002), pp. 49-72

concerned with promoting their upward mobility than with the production of knowledge. One particularly unfortunate result is the continued marginalization or silencing of the African voice on the global stage.

Introduction

Cameroon's university space witnessed a remarkable change in 1993 following a reform of the system, which enabled the creation of six new public universities as well as a number of private institutions. Significantly, this occurred in the changing political context and guaranteed freedoms of the so-called Liberty Laws of 1990. Growth in the number of tertiary institutions was supposed to spawn an increase in the number of faculty, a group that had benefited from a certain amount of immunity even before the passage of the Liberty Laws. Immunity gave academics a voice, thereby increasing their ability to contribute to the pluralisation of public space.

This change in the landscape of tertiary education triggered great social expectations for three reasons. First, universities play a major role in the education and training of high-level professionals, precisely the group that is in short supply in most African countries. Several World Bank studies, starting with the Berg Report (1981:81) identified this as a constraint on Africa's development. Second, universities are the sites par excellence for the production and transmission of knowledge, processes which, according to Paulo Freire, are dialectically related (1987:8). Yet in the sphere of knowledge production, as in other spheres in global relations, Africa is consistently relegated to the periphery. As Abiola Irele notes, "African scholarship is at best marginal, and at worst nonexistent in the total economy of intellectual endeavour in the world today" (cited in Bates, Mudimbe, & O'Barr 1993:221). This, however, is not a structural condition, despite the widespread tendency to perceive Western scholars as the gate-keepers of scholarship (Prah 1999:25). Admission is possible, although it is contingent upon certain minimum requirements, such as the respect for scientific rigor that is intrinsic to the Western research protocol. Third, as institutions of civil society, tertiary institutions in Africa have a vanguard role to play as a countervailing force against the omnipotent African post-colonial state. This has been one of their historic missions, given the weakness of the other

institutions of civil society (Sawyerr 1998:21). African scholarship played this vanguard role before, in its formative years, as demonstrated by its visibility in the struggle against imperialism, structural adjustment programs, and undemocratic regimes (Nieftagodien 1999:59). Indeed Western social scientists have acknowledged the importance of this contribution and have written about African scholars as a source of inspiration (See Cooper, cited in Nieftagodien 1999:60). At the present historical juncture, when Africa finds itself at another crossroads and facing a deepening crisis, the universities must prepare for and experience an intellectual renaissance. Apparently in recognition of this, the Cameroonian government, in preparation for the 2001 Africa-France Summit in Yaounde, convened a group of scholars to address the broad topic "Africa and the Challenge of Globalization." Africa cannot be relegated to the cultural and intellectual margins if it is to confront this challenge. In other words, there is a need to reclaim an African vision and dream. Too often, as Arjun Appadurai put it, intellectual endeavour is seen as "naturally metropolitan, modern and Western. The rest of the world is seen as the idiom of cases, events, examples and test-sites in relation to this stable location for the production or revision of theory" (1998:2). African scholarship, in other words, must bring about a reversal of present trends whereby theories based on empirical research from other cultures are applied indiscriminately to Africa.² The African viewpoint on global and local issues must be heard. As Elspeth Huxley stated in the forward to *The Strangers*, "no person of one race or culture can truly interpret events as they appear to individuals of a totally different race and culture" (cited in Prah 1998:26). The Cameroonian government's choice for the theme of the 2000 Africa-France Summit can be seen as evidence of a *prise de conscience* that is a promising starting place for an intellectual renaissance in Cameroon. Yet, as proclaimed by the Kampala Declaration of 1990 (a statement signed by a group of African scholars in the wake of a symposium organized by CODESRIA), academic freedom and autonomy are indispensable for the realization of this goal. Research, it has been noted, neither discovers a metaphysical or ontological idea of truth and wisdom, nor realizes a teleological goal in human history. Rather it is a fallible process of investigation which analyses interconnected phenomena in the past, aims to resolve social problems in the

² Kim D. Butler (2000) refers to this as the "Gramsci problem." Since some of this theory is inappropriate, she argues that there is a need for the development of an indigenous theory.

present, and works to prevent catastrophes in the future. These activities can take place only in the context of democratic civic life (Calloni 1998:106). So far, research has been constrained in Cameroon by the violence, both physical and symbolic, that permeates the tertiary educational sector. The government's *prise de conscience* must be more than just a rhetorical strategy, invoking only a beautiful memory. What remains to be seen is whether the political will that is needed to usher in an enabling environment for research and production will be found.

University as a Space of Domination

The creation and *étatization* of tertiary education in Cameroon occurred almost at the same period as the creation of the hegemonic single party, the Cameroon National Union (CNU). Given the tendency of the CNU to shrink the public arena and discourage dissent, it is not surprising that it actively stifled the free and creative growth of the university. The production of knowledge thrives on the continuous questioning of the truth claims of any assertion. As Mill argues, even the most noble and worthy ideas, if unchallenged, easily degenerate into prejudice, into a “dead dogma, not a living truth” (cited in Robson 1977:245). This is the liberal ideal of education: “When there are persons to be found, who form the exception to the apparent unanimity of the world on any subject, even if the world is right, it is always probable that dissentients have something worth hearing to say for themselves, and that truth would lose something by their silence” (Mill cited in Robson 1977:254).

In the past, production of dissident knowledge was proof that some scholars subscribed to this viewpoint. One exemplary figure is the ethnophilosopher Marcien Towa, whose trenchant critique of the idea of “Negritude” in *Leopold Senghor: Negritude or Seroitude?* (1971) was seen as an apologetic for imperialism, neocolonial culture, and European expansionism. The increasing political strength of such “heretical” views caused people such as Towa to be banished from the lecture halls of the University of Yaounde! Granted, the vocal opposition not only of scholars such as Towa but also of members of the outlawed Union des Populations du Cameroun (UPC) may have been merely symbolic. That is, they were conscious of the

fact that in the end the forces of law and order would treat them indulgently.³ Despite the policing of scholarship and ambient fear, “dissidents” in Vaclav Havel’s sense of the term were still present.⁴

Seemingly, the reform of Cameroon’s state university system in 1993 set the stage for an enormous expansion in the production of knowledge. As an acknowledgment that overcrowding in the hitherto single institution, the University of Yaounde, had been detrimental to the production of scholarship, the reform promised to refocus the faculty toward, and reenergize them in the production of, scholarship. Clear evidence of this were the frequent calls for the establishment or resuscitation of the university press. But in order to attain this goal, visibility had to be given not only to what Gramsci called the “organic intellectual” (one connected to a particular political party), but also to the “critical intellectual” (one free from economic and political constraints). In short, this required a change in policy, for critical scholars had in the past been relegated to a kind of *gulag archipelagos*. Towa, for instance, had been sent to work as a researcher at the Institute of Human Sciences, where resources were few precisely because of the tendency in government circles to associate critical researchers with sympathy for political opposition parties. Others were simply sent to teach in secondary schools. Towa’s nomination as the Rector of the University of Yaounde II was construed as a sign of the rehabilitation of critical scholarship, but his dismissal shortly afterward marked the end of that brief illusion. Marxist scholars were allowed to return home from exile, but they did not fare well in employment or publication. President Paul Biya’s commitment to the multiplicity and variety of sources of information as the only guarantee of an enlightened public (1987:54) was neither sustained in policy nor enforced in practice (see Nyamnjoh 1993, 1996; Mongo Beti 1993; Kom 1993, 1996; Eboussi Boulaga 1997). His maxim of “la vérité viens d’en haut, les rumeurs d’en bas” [truth comes from above, rumour from below] has never really allowed for competing perspectives, even in university spaces.

³ Pierre Bourdieu (1984) sees student protests in France as predicated on this thesis. See also Wacquant (1993:22, 26). No doubt the unrestrained use of state violence on an episodic basis, for example the assassination of Engelbert Mveng, begins to problematize the validity of this claim

⁴ Vaclav Havel (1992:167-71) points out that despite the critical position of dissidents, the state does not clamp down on them because of their connections to the outside world.

Nevertheless, because of an initial impression of policy change created by Biya and his regime, most intellectuals celebrated the statutory “autonomy” that was granted the University of Buea (UB) in principle. According to Decree No 93/034 of January 1993, which set up this institution, the Vice Chancellor (VC) was supposed to be appointed by decree from among members of “professorial rank of Anglo-Saxon training following recommendation of the Senate and Council.” Since appointments by decree are discretionary, there is a consensus in Cameroon that in the usual situation the beneficiaries tend to be lackeys of the president, motivated to maintain their posts and easily corruptible.⁵ In this case, selection by means of an interview process tended to foreground competence and allow for autonomy as defined by the Academic Staff Union of (Nigerian) Universities (ASUU) (with which many Anglophone Cameroonian academics are familiar): “the democratic regulation of the internal institutions of governance to pursue and regulate research, teaching, learning, study and the production and dissemination of knowledge and related activities (*CODESRLA Bulletin* 1996:6). Furthermore, there was always a chance that incompetent administrators could be replaced, as tenure was limited to four years, renewable once. Contrary to the provisions of the Decree No 93/034, the president appointed the VC without the recommendation of the senate and council. That the first VC, Dorothy Njeuma, was a member of the Political Bureau of the CPDM (the Cameroon People’s Democratic Movement, the successor of the CMU) only fuelled fears that prominent among her roles was the policing of the production of critical scholarship. This fear was reinforced by Article 3 of the decree, a kind of escape clause that guaranteed academic freedom only within the context of “laws and regulations and subject to the obligations of discretion binding on all public servants.” In addition, all the other officers, such as the deans and directors of schools, were appointed, not always on the merit of their scholarship. As Francis Nyamnjoh wrote, in reality, statutory provisions notwithstanding,

⁵ See Calloni (1998:99). In effect, a decree introduces an unmediated relationship between ruler and subjects. This leads to despotism. For Rousseau, a despot is not simply against the laws of his society but is also above the law itself. A despotism reduces political life to a relationship and subordinates the wills and interests of the people to that of the despot. It is plausible that the inclusion of the senate and council in the process of naming the vice chancellor was meant as a form of mediation.

The system has little regard for virtue and meritocracy, and proves to have more room for loyal mediocrity than critical excellence.... A second- or third-rate academic, for example, who provides the regime with the conceptual rhetoric it needs to justify its excesses and high-handedness, is more likely to be promoted to professor (with or without publications) and made dean, Vice Chancellor or even minister, and to accumulate portfolios, than his more productive but critical counterpart who is denied promotion and recognition for being a genuine intellectual. (1999:107)

Though not privy to the calculations that underlay the decision-making process, we can conjecture that the fact that the Anglophones, a minority group in this colonially bicultural state, were clamouring for the introduction of a new political order that would give them more autonomy contributed inordinately to the decision to contravene the provisions of the decree. Allowing the Anglophones a free hand over this process could have led to the nomination of a candidate who would tolerate, if not encourage, the angry literature that Anglophone scholars such as Bate Besong (*Beasts of No Nation*, 1990) were producing at this historical moment. To paraphrase Nancy Fraser, the university, in the view of the regime, threatened to become another “parallel discursive arena where members of the subordinated social group [Anglophones] could invent and circulate counter-discourses to formulate oppositional interpretations of their identity, interests and needs” (1992:123). At the same time, the autocratic nature of the state, where those who make the law are above it or observe it only in its breach, must have also been a factor. As it turned out, one of the intended or unintended effects of these new appointments was to establish a significant age differential between this group and the rest of the staff. Whether or not the generational struggle, as Feuer has said, is even more important than the class struggle as “the driving force of history,” these appointments had a negative effect on the production of scholarship, as the older generation of African scholars is arguably less productive than the younger (if they are productive at all). Endowed with cultural capital that has enabled them to position themselves in society, they are now more preoccupied with acquiring economic capital. And only the successful enforcement of loyalty to the regime can guarantee their maintenance as managers. Commitment to this principle has caused the Vice Chancellor to give negative recommendations to candidates applying for scholarships for further studies. According to one informant, the

applications of all lecturers who participated in strikes called by the National Union of Teachers of Higher Education (SYNES) with a view to improving their living conditions in 1999 were given a negative review. In the case of one candidate who had been admitted to Southern Illinois University in Carbondale with a Fulbright Fellowship, the Vice Chancellor even tried to retract an earlier positive recommendation that this person had received.⁶

The University of Buea is located on the campus of the School of Translation and Interpretation (ASTI). Because the state was under the World Bank's Structural Adjustment Program, and because the bank was not in favour of creating of new tertiary institutions, funds were not allocated for the construction of a new infrastructure. Essentially, this meant that the new institution inherited the library of ASTI, a specialized collection that was acquired to suit the needs of about seventy students. No funds were allocated either for the purchase of books or for current periodicals. Ironically, in 1998 a new library, though still not befitting a university, was built with funding from Cooperation Française—that is, by the French interests that were using the Yaounde regime as their Trojan horse. Still lacking a budget for the purchase of books, UB depended wholly on philanthropic organizations and other sources. The university, in effect, became a cultural toxic dumping site for unwanted or obsolete literature. Its librarians had the arduous task of going through collections of discarded books in order to create a library which, in the social sciences, could easily fit into a living room of modest size. Neither does the institution have a networked computer system providing access to e-books. It has just one computer linked to the World Wide Web and it is located in the VC's office. Naturally, demand for its use is high and access is considered a privilege rather than a right. E-mail, furthermore, is saved onto a diskette by administrative assistants and delivered via electronic posting, thereby providing the VC with the potential

⁶ For an explanation of generational conflict as the driving force of history, see Feuer (1969). Eboe Hutchful (1998:38) has argued that the older generation of African scholars is tired and no longer productive. But because of its control of the academy, it has constrained, if not deenergized, the youthful generation which is more committed to research and publication. For the specific case of Cameroon, where some professors have not published even an article in the past twenty-five years, see the *Post*, Oct. 2, 2000, p. 3. For an explication of the dynamics by which those in power maintain their position, see Wacquant (1993). The VC did decide eventually not to retract the Fulbright Scholar's recommendation, though it has been argued that she did so because her daughter had applied for a U.S. visa and she did not want to alienate the Americans

to monitor electronic activity in general and perceived subversive activity in particular. In these circumstances collaborations that allow scholars to work with each other in virtual research laboratories or networks and thereby collapse the distinction made between the “centre” and the “periphery” of knowledge production (see Russell 2001:277) are not possible. A cursory examination of citations in papers written by UB lecturers shows that most of them were written in the 1960s and 1970s. Recently, a paper submitted for publication in Britain by a lecturer in geography was returned because it did not make any reference to current literature. Colloquially, students who are concerned about the way the university is run call it a Comprehensive High School, or worse, a glorified nursery school.

The problem is exacerbated by the faculty’s heavy teaching load. Each assistant lecturer is supposed to teach three courses per semester. Course assignment, it should be noted, varies from year to year and is done at the discretion of the head of department. That an individual’s specialization is hardly taken into account can be deduced from commentaries made in senate meetings by senior officials who claim that in order to be qualified to teach a course in the social sciences an instructor only has to read the assigned books in advance! The instructors’ workloads have increased on a *pro rata* basis with the intake of students. Classes of more than three or four hundred students are not uncommon. No wonder that lecturers who teach three such classes, without the help of teaching assistants, neglect their research. Conscious of this fact, the institution rarely applies the “publish or perish” rule contained in its statutes, although it may be evoked to settle scores with lecturers out of favour with the administration. In the social sciences, not only are intellectuals who are perceived as radical closely policed, but their chances of getting published are also reduced by a censorship that denies them access to local journals. Among the faculty in general, the drastic reduction in their salaries has also robbed them of the motivation to carry out research. Since most of them have to moonlight in order to make ends meet, it is not uncommon to enter a taxi at night driven by a university lecturer, or to find students drinking in a bar run by their professor.⁷ In many cases, fear of

⁷ This trend, we must observe, was more common in the early 1990s. The devaluation of the teaching profession is demonstrated by the fact that police inspectors, most of whom have only primary school education, earn more than university lecturers. The security-conscious state panders to the interests of the military establishment, devaloring cultural capital and those who possess it.

being fired silences the teacher completely, especially someone with a family to support” (Shor & Freire 1987:59). Caution becomes the guiding principle here, as there is nowhere to go except the unemployment pool at a time when even traditional social support networks have completely disintegrated and transitional pathways are fraught with uncertainty.

Since disciplinary power notoriously is exercised through visibility, imposing upon its subjects a principle of compulsory visibility (see Foucault 1984:199), the University of Buea has always insisted that all lecturers be present on campus even outside of scheduled classes and office hours. Ironically, the university has such a shortage of space that as many as four lecturers often share a cubicle with two tables. In some cases, whole departments consist of not more than two such cubicles. What’s more, the university insists that lecturers live in Buea. At the behest of the university, Fondo Sikod, an acclaimed economist who had taught at Yaounde before his transfer to Buea, was brought before the disciplinary board of the civil service for continuing to live in Yaounde. Sikod was spared punishment only because he produced a medical report indicating that he had to stay in Yaounde for reasons of health. In the wake of this hearing and on the strength of the report, he was transferred back to Yaounde, although the University of Buea, paradoxically, continued to invite him to give courses on a part-time basis.

One of reasons that university officials show such fervour in disciplining lecturers is simply that they are driven to maintain their own positions. Francis Nyamnjoh facetiously defines their Ph.D. degrees as “pull him down”; pulling down a nonconforming colleague means that the official will not be pulled down in turn. The same reasons account for their interest in funding political activities over scholarly ones. A huge percentage of the annual budget and a large portion of the already meagre resources are devoted to political activities such as travel and rallies. Lecturers who seek to prove their loyalty to the regime and thereby position themselves for appointments always apply for these funds with requests, for instance, “for transport and a 2-day Mission Allowance to attend the PM’s Goodwill Mission to Menji, Lebialem led by Hon. N. N. Mbile” (Letter of Dec. 6, 2000, to the VC). In one instance, the amount spent for a single mission was more than one million francs CFA. It is noteworthy that the amount received in some cases is almost equivalent to the beneficiary’s salary.

Requests for funding, even just for subsidies, to attend conferences that have some scholarly or pedagogical benefit are consistently rejected. Ironically, standard policy of the university requires that any application for aid be accompanied by just this justification. When Joseph Tahsoh was invited to lead a panel discussion at a conference in London, the university refused. The university even refuses to recommend its lecturers for academic exchange fellowships. Recently it failed to endorse an application from a lecturer for a UNESCO Pilot African Academic Exchange Fellowship. In response to UNESCO's call for applications on the subject of "peace-building," the lecturer, who had received only positive reviews from his department and other university personnel, had submitted a proposal entitled "Perspectives on Resolving the 'Anglophone Problem' in Cameroon." The VC noted simply that she was unable to "endorse the slant of the proposal."⁸ UNESCO never had the chance to consider its merits, and the lecturer was refused an opportunity to further his career and participate in an important international exchange. Such censorship at UB is not a recent development. In 1997, the administration turned down an application by Francis Nyamnjoh for a regional conference to be hosted by the Department of Sociology, which he headed, with funding from the London-based World Association for Christian Communication (WACC). In addition to invoking the need for "prior authorisation from the Presidency of the Republic for International meetings," the VC wrote, "We regret to inform you that the background paper on "Media Ownership and Control" as contained in document No.00111/75-4/UB/SOC of 24 March 1997 carries sensitive political overtones which are inappropriate for the University of Buea to be seen to promote at this particular time. The slant given in the paper is also at variance with the view presented by WACC on the factors which they perceive as contributing to the globalisation of poverty; the WACC document faults rich nations, international financial institutions and communication transnationals for the spread of poverty (see WACC Programme for 1997-2001)." A year later, Nyamnjoh was denied permission to take up a six-month fellowship at the African Studies Centre in Leiden, Holland, in order to pursue a research project, "Political Change and Regionalism in Cameroon: The Anglophone Problem." One of the reasons advanced by the administration for the refusal was that "the subject and

⁸ See observations on L/N 0939/UB/DVC/T, Aug. 8, 2000.

content of your research proposal advances statements which are biased, unfounded and injurious to the institutions of the State; this raises doubts on the academic value of the research you propose to carry out and is an embarrassment to the University of Buea which is State-owned.”⁹ The pervasive academic censorship exhausts and defeats most Cameroonian scholars. Pessimistic about their ability to provide innovative and convincing answers to Cameroon’s present malaise, far too many become preoccupied with upward social mobility. Their ambition is fuelled by the media, especially state-run print and electronic media. Political intellectuals appear on television programs such as “Dimanche Midi,” “Cameroon Calling,” and “The Debate” and have contributed enormously to the growth of what might be called a “heteronomous culture” in Cameroon—that is, a culture of expertise validated by the mass media.¹⁰ Among other payoffs of this strategy has been the selection of these sorts of people to act as “Charges de Missions” for CPDM campaign teams, positions that in turn increase in their visibility. In this political space, they are enclosed in a circle of reciprocal seduction where, in an effort to sell their ideas to the masses, “they do not seek only to convince the public of the validity of their arguments, but, moreover, ... to be loved by viewers”(Calloni 1998:102). This phenomenon, incidentally, begins to explain the absence of whole sections of the teaching staff from the university during campaign periods. And, to the extent that they are part of a university system that tends to confound an individual’s political and academic legitimacy, this increased popularity is likely to redound to their credit in the university as well.

In January 1996, frustrated by a university system that has room for everything but academic excellence, Clement N. Ngwasiri, vice dean of the Faculty of Social and Management Sciences of UB, resigned “from the corps of Higher Education of the Cameroonian Public Service.” In his letter of resignation he blamed the minister of higher education (and former VC of the University of Yaounde), Peter Agbor Tabi, for a “style of management ... characterised by vindictiveness, high-handedness, egoism, lust for power, disregard for the views of...close collaborators and, most important, a

⁹ See memorandum 0708/75-4/UB/WOOO, July 16, 1997, and Letter 0352/75-3/UB/COOO, June 23, 1998, from the vice chancellor.

¹⁰ The concept of heteronomous culture is adapted from Marina Calloni’s concept of “heteronomous individuals,” that is, people who, lacking any real recognition inside their disciplines, turn to the mass media to find success. See Calloni (1998:105).

tendency to take irrational decisions.”¹¹ In an acknowledgment of his letter, which had been transmitted through the VC of UB, the VC announced that

your resignation comes in the heat of the most savage in a series of senseless strikes by students of the University of Buea. The effective date of your departure of 1 January 1996 is also only two days before the beginning of end-of-semester examinations for which you are responsible as Vice-Dean of the Faculty of Social and Management Sciences. Curiously also, the ringleaders of the present strike action are not only in your Faculty but also in your department (Law). Some of them are those with whom you attended a subversive political meeting near the Presbyterian Church, Molyko, on 13 February 1995 which called on students to overthrow the regime.¹²

In certain cases an individual's preoccupation with self-validation before the regime has led to intellectual dishonesty. Recently a renowned political scientist and member of cabinet argued in the *Post* (Jan. 22, 2001) that “the reason we fought for African independence was because the African believed that colonialism was bad. *Cameroon came into existence before the colonial masters split us into two* (our emphasis). Thank God, in 1961, we came together again because what God has put together, man was not supposed to put asunder.” Though the concepts of nation and state are conflated in this argument, it has good political purchase among those who argue that Cameroon predated the colonial state. Furthermore, because of the speaker's credentials and the fact that he is endowed with cultural and social capital, more and more Cameroonians, especially those who are angry about the past or the present, are likely to accept this mythical version of their past (see Foucault 1984:248)-almost a colonization of consciousness. Similarly, a professor at a colloquium organized at the UB argued in the glare of television cameras that the reunited Anglophone and Francophone Cameroon was like a marriage, which is bound to sour after forty years!¹³

¹¹ See C. N. Ngwasiri's letter of resignation, No. 0818/75-4/UB/MOOO, Nov. 22, 1995, to His Excellency the President of the Republic of Cameroon.

¹² Letter 7435/75-3/UB/WOOO, Dec. 27, 1995, from the vice chancellor.

¹³ See Ndjana (2000). Admittedly, the use of this analogy provoked a storm in the hall. Ndjana did not, however, retract it; he contended that this was only a side comment and not the theme of his paper.

This, in effect, turns Benedict Anderson's definition of a nation as an imagined community on its head. Nietzsche once observed that "truths are illusions about which one has forgotten that this is what they are" (1954:47). Critical scholars are confronted with vigorous resistance when they attempt to challenge this kind of ignorance and dishonesty, for they threaten the circle of reciprocal seduction that exists between the state intellectuals and the masses, thus threatening the profitable dialectic between information and control. This was instanced in 1997 in the case of Ndiva Mbua, an associate professor of education at the University of Buea who was also the national assistant secretary for finance for the Social Democratic Front (SDF), an opposition party. He had served as the campaign manager for the SDF in the South-West Province during the municipal elections in March 1996. His campaign slots over the radio became very popular, and his reference to the fact that the SDF was going to flush out the CPDM with an "engine saw" (electric saw) earned him the sobriquet *Engine Saw*. In the wake of the defeat of the CPDM in the election, Mbua was transferred to Ecole Normale Supérieure Bambili in the North-West Province, the institution at which he had taught from 1980 to 1993, before he was transferred to UB at the request of the university. Mbua saw his transfer back to Bambili as an act of political vindictiveness. Mbua's department at UB, the Department of Educational Foundations and Administration, had acute capacity problems, and the VC, who participated in the transfer, acknowledged that the university, with its noncompetitive pay package, would have a hard time replacing such a qualified staff member. Yet Mbua, who had already been assigned courses and had begun teaching for the semester, was transferred to Bambili to lecture "to empty amphitheatres having as his audience only the empty seats." In a petition to the minister of education, he said that the VC had tried to persuade and cajole him to join the CPDM. The minister of education insisted that the transfer was a "normal or routine administrative action," although he himself was a member of the CPDM campaign team in the South-West Province.¹⁴ It was clear to Mbua that the transfer was a matter of reprisal. He sought redress in the Administrative Bench of the Supreme Court, which ruled in his favour. The education minister, how-

¹⁴ L/N 00182/MINESUP/DPO/A, Minister of Higher Education to Ndiva Mbua, March, 5, 1996.

ever, refused to execute the court's ruling, although his successor in the ministry did, finally demonstrating some respect for the rule of law.¹⁵

Foucault observes that punishment, especially when carried out in the gaze of the public, is a spectacle meant not only to reaffirm the power of decision-makers but also to serve as a deterrent for future offenders. Granting this, we would posit that the punishment meted out to Mbua was meant to silence other critical voices within the academy. Critical pluralism is discouraged in favour of docility, and others besides Mbua have suffered. Assistant lecturers in particular live in a general state of fear and insecurity, constantly being reminded that they are on probation and that contract renewal is not automatic. In September 2000 three assistant lecturers did not have their contracts renewed. This action was attributed, officially, to their failure to publish-although, as we have seen, this is rarely a criterion for promotion or nonpromotion at UB. It was widely believed instead that their participation in a strike action of the SYNES was the real cause.¹⁶ The minister of higher education, as chancellor of Cameroon State Universities, rescinded the decision and posted them to the University of Douala, exacerbating the already chronic staff shortage at UB. But intervention to redress this particular situation did not mean the end of the troubles for the so-called recalcitrant staff. "SYNES members are usually not given research grants when they apply for them," said one instructor. "They are discriminated against in terms of staff development schemes such as Commonwealth scholarships, etc., and they are frequently not given permission to go on [research] missions both locally and internationally." One dean convened a meeting just to celebrate the fact that he and the university administration had scuttled the promotion of a SYNES member.¹⁷ Decidedly, despite UB's popular slogan of "UB the Place to Be," it is a university whose administration rewards docility and obedience in its staff and students rather than research, teaching, or knowledge.

¹⁵ See interview with the vice chancellor in *Cameron Tribune*, March 8, 1996, p. 8; Memorandum of Law *in re* Dr. Mbua *v.* the Minister of Higher Education, para. 7; Ndiva Mbua, letter to the Minister of Higher Education, para. 6, p. 3, Feb. 16, 1998; Ordinance 42/0BE/PCA/CE95-96, Sept. 19, 1996. Mbua in his statement to the court also pointed out (Para. 7) that "it is highly abnormal and far from routine for an administrator to post one of his functionaries to a department that clearly has no use for his services, unless the unspoken intention is to punish that functionary."

¹⁶ See the *Post*, Oct. 2, 2000, p.1, and Oct. 9, 2000, p. 3.

¹⁷ See the *Freedom Forum* 5, no. 1 (Oct. 2001): 3

Staff Development and Cooperation

As indicated above, the low salaries offered in Cameroon's university system make it difficult for universities to attract competent staff. Cameroonian graduates of European countries are extremely reluctant to return, opting instead to live and work outside the country in places where the remuneration is better and there are fewer obstacles to scholarly work. Returning graduates prefer to enter the military or join the police, trading the higher social status of academic life for a better salary. Several years ago, in fact, there was a mass exodus of graduates who had already returned to Cameroon and then changed their minds. The cumulative effect has been the replacement of Ph.D. academics with holders of master's degrees (more than 60 per cent of the faculty at the University of Buea have the lesser degree), with a serious shortage of tenured staff: that is, faculty at the level of associate professor and above. Since obtaining a master's often requires only one year of study after the bachelor's degree, it is not surprising that few of these young lecturers are interested in or qualified for scholarly research (although some, to their credit, have carried out excellent, even groundbreaking, research). Nevertheless, much of the faculty simply lacks the capacity to nurture and mentor students in the various academic disciplines.

The shortfall in tenured staff is exacerbated by logistical problems such as the absence of well-equipped laboratories and libraries, the *sine qua non* for instruction at the Ph.D. level. These deficits, of course, have not discouraged the institution from introducing doctoral programs, although even the assistant lecturers with master's degrees are unconvinced about their quality and rarely register for them. The most committed and ambitious ones now seek to further their education outside the country and by means of foreign grants. Against all odds, some of the staff have been recipients of foreign grants. However, nomination is not a guarantee that the university will grant them a study leave, as subterranean considerations permeate the decision-making process. Notable among the strategies are administrative bottlenecks that are contrived rather than accidental. Letters notifying the authorities of an award and requesting permission to accept it move through the system at a snail's pace. There is no doubt that this tendency seems to be a systemic trait, to some extent; it is for good reason that most laws have provisos stipulating that failure to respond within a prescribed period of time should be seen as consent. In cases of grants, however, consent has to be

explicit rather than tacit, and failure to respond in time has been prejudicial to some beneficiaries.¹⁸ Authorities at UB have used all kinds of subterfuge or convoluted logic to deny the grantees permission to leave. In one case, they refused to sign the forms of a candidate who had been nominated for a Fulbright Grant because, they said, he did not dress with proper formality.¹⁹ Rigor in scholarship was replaced, apparently, by an emphasis on sartorial rigor. Even those who are allowed to take advantage of an opportunity to work or study outside Cameroon-an opportunity, it should be emphasized, that has come their way only by dint of personal initiative-are subjected to firm regulations in matters such as scheduling and the academic calendar. Without paying any heed to the progress of their work, and probably because of the compulsory visibility considerations we discussed above, scholars usually are required to return to Cameroon on a particular date, even if it is in the middle of the semester. In 1995 when Nantang Jua was a Rockefeller Humanities Fellow at the University of Michigan, his host department received a letter of complaint about his failure to return on time, an action whose intent was either to embarrass the Fellow or cause the host institution to terminate his appointment. When Jua returned to Cameroon, he was brought before a civil service disciplinary committee on charges filed by university officials. They claimed that his prolonged absence had caused the university harm, that he was remorseless, and that he should be suspended for six months without salary: an odd recommendation, under the

¹⁸ That consent has to be explicit is borne out by L/N 5775/75-3/UB/WOOO of Dec. 9, 1994, from the vice chancellor to the dean of the Faculty of Social and Management Sciences. Whereas this query acknowledges the fact that the minister of higher education granted permission for Nantang Jua to travel to the University of Michigan by L/N 2342/MINESUP/DFO/A of Sept. 8, 1994, "it would seem that Dr. Jua left for the United States before this information could be communicated to him" and "long before November 1994 when he indicated he wanted to leave." Significantly, it overlooks or covers over the fact that Jua undertook this trip during the holiday period.

¹⁹ Given our interest in the symbolism of power, this episode is particularly interesting insofar as it displays the academy as a site of opposition between the *vieux jeux* and *nouveaux jeux*. Whereas the former cling to a formal mode of dressing, the latter are more casual and relaxed or dressed down (see Bourdieu 1984). Insofar as this relationship is one of power, the *vieux jeux* intuitively, even if this be the product of a momentary reflex, make a connection between the mode of dress and scholarship. Thus they associate the *nouveaux jeux* with postmodern tendencies, and by that same token, critical scholarship. Admittedly, the Fulbright candidates's forms were signed later on-after the expiration of the deadline.

circumstances, since his absence was supposed to have been the crime in the first place.²⁰

When Francis Nyamnjoh was a visiting fellow at the African Studies Centre in Leiden, the VC requested that his salary from the University of Buea be stopped. In a letter to the Cameroonian minister of higher education, she complained of “absence from duty without permission of Dr. Francis Nyamnjoh” and wrote: “While we are still trying to know of his whereabouts, we have written to the Minister of the Economy and Finance for his salary to be suspended forthwith.” The salary was not reinstated, even after Nyamnjoh had returned and started teaching. Instead, the university recommended to the minister of higher education that he be brought before a disciplinary committee; they were deprived of the experience only because Nyamnjoh left Cameroon for the University of Botswana. Apparently in retaliation, and as a sign that human relations are privileged over science at UB, the university decided to eliminate his article, “Cameroon: A Country United by Ethnic Ambition and Difference,” from the *Journal of Social Sciences (JASS)*; published by the Faculty of Social and Management Sciences, which already had accepted it. (The same article eventually was published in a 1999 issue of *African Affairs*, long before the inaugural issue of *JASS*, delayed by administrative bottlenecks and financial difficulties, was ever released.) Furthermore, a popular postgraduate program in development studies with which Nyamnjoh had been associated was cancelled on the pretext that he had not been on campus to defend it.²¹

²⁰ That these trials are acts of intellectual violence meant to devalue the defendant and cause him to lose all self-confidence is demonstrated by the kind of treatment the defendant receives. One is allowed to bring along a lawyer, but the climate at these long trials is positively Kafkaesque, with examiners, for example, drinking tea and eating biscuits while carrying on their interrogation. An interesting question is the extent to which such a violating experience constitutes not just punishment (or the intention to punish) but also actual evil. According to some theorists, the difference between suffering and evil has to do with the presence or absence of a responsible agent; See Connolly (1991).

²¹ See Letter 1020/75-3/UB/A200, September 30, 1998, Vice Chancellor to Minister of Higher Education; Letter 1021/75-3/UB/A200, September 30, 1998, Vice Chancellor to Minister of the Economy and Finance requesting suspension without delay of Nyamnjoh's salary; Decision 2277/UB/ADA/PD, August 17, 1999, by Vice Chancellor, setting up “a Disciplinary Board to examine matters of indiscipline against Dr. Francis Nyamnjoh, Lecturer in the Faculty of Social and Management Sciences.” Since the publication of the first number of *JASS*, the vice chancellor has become extremely reluctant to release funding for its continuous publication. According to a

In November 2000, the university, with a view toward asserting total control over its faculty, wrote to various embassies in Cameroon asking that cooperative ventures henceforth be arranged between one institution and another, rather than between specific faculty members.²² Officials of foreign universities have always been sceptical about inter-institutional cooperation because, they argue, Third World institutions tend to send burnt-out scholars who see the sabbatical as a holiday. They may not be aware that in most cases these institutions have sent such people deliberately, because the paramount concern is to suppress critical voices. Hence DB's desire to limit direct contact between individual scholars and foreign embassies or universities. The university proposed itself as intermediary in order to cut back on the exposure of subversive knowledge and to make sure that critical voices are unable to evade their control.

Genuine cooperation between colleges and universities, such as collaborative scholarship or the reciprocal exchange of visiting faculty, always enriches the academic life of individuals and of institutions, but it is particularly beneficial to scholars and universities at the "margins." When UB was still in its infancy and unable even to wean itself from the University of Yaounde, it worked frantically to attract foreign exchange scholars. In some cases, visiting faculty, perhaps out of benevolence or maybe just because of a frontier spirit, offered their services to the university pro bono. In most cases, however, their fervour was soon dampened by the realization that they were appreciated only insofar as they limited themselves to the transmission of theoretical and contextually distant knowledge. As the following case of

staff member (personal communication, Sept. 19, 2001), her decision is predicated on the fact that most articles appearing in the journal have been extremely critical of the state. This decision is also revealing because it shows the extent of the centralization in UB, where some of the staff claim that not even basic supplies can be bought without the approval of the vice chancellor. Though *JASS* has an editorial board, it is common knowledge at UB that all decisions concerning the articles to be published are made by the dean of the Department of Social and Management Sciences. And a certain opaqueness surrounds the criteria used for these decisions.

²² In L/N 3329/UB/AcA/DTTS of November 6, 2000, to the Director of Public Affairs of the U.S. Embassy in Cameroon acknowledging the nomination of Augustine Nsang and Arnold Epanty for Fulbright Awards, the Vice Chancellor stipulates that "However, the University would prefer to endorse future applications at the time that they are submitted as not to be placed in the awkward situation of refusing to support candidates already selected by the Embassy." This exception could not fail to raise suspicion, as the procedure adopted by the embassies is meant to foster objectivity and transparency in the selection process.

Kai Schmidt-Soltau shows, they were not supposed to be engaged in applying this scholarship to Cameroonian reality. Schmidt-Soltau applied to teach sociology at UB in 1997 without a salary. He received a part-time appointment, and soon became involved in writing a column, "Inspections from Outside," in the *Post*, a local newspaper. His articles were extremely popular and contributed, in fact, to revivifying a waning newspaper reading culture in Anglophone Cameroon. The university generally was indifferent, but their indifference turned into rage when he began to write critically about the institution, as in articles entitled "Corruption and Development" or especially "Cage of Fools" (Schmidt-Soltau 1999:78), an attack on UB for having built a four-kilometre-long fence around the university when students and staff had neither lecture halls, a library, nor offices. The dean of the Faculty of Social and Management Sciences, in a terse letter to Schmidt-Soltau, complained,

As a state owned institution of higher learning, we cannot afford to throw parochial and unverified criticisms on the government under which we work, and which pays us all the emoluments that we receive. We do not, however, refuse criticism provided that they are true and constructive. Your article has failed to show us the way forward from the corruption- laden state that you have written about.... The article as it stands is simply a hair raising paper which only goes to denigrate the African system of governance, a position taken by some Western media for a long time. (Cited in Schmidt-Soltau 1999:75)

It should be noted, by the way, that Transparency International, certainly not an organ of the biased "Western media," classified Cameroon in 1997 and 1998 as the most corrupt country in the world based on its "corruption perception index."²³ What was most disquieting to the authorities, however, was not Schmidt-Soltau's critique of "the African system of governance" but the fact that he mentioned that he worked at UB. "It would have been necessary that you write your article without dragging in the University by mentioning that you are a lecturer in the University of Buea," said the dean. "It should never be said that the University of Buea is critical of the state on issues it cannot verify and prove." Needless to say, indication of an author's

²³ For a more scholarly work with substantive evidence from Cameroon, see Jean-Francois Bayart, Stephen Ellis, and Beatrice Hibou (1999).

institutional affiliation is standard practice in all publications, and the university had never questioned this practice-until, that is, it disagreed with the content of the publication.

Despite his skirmishes with the administration, Schmidt-Soltau accepted invitations to participate in academic forums on campus. Invited by the UB Organization of African Unity Club to one such forum, he presented a paper entitled "Civil Society and Conflict Resolution in Africa." In the middle of his presentation, the Vice Chancellor and the governor walked out (Schmidt-Soltau 1999:83). The paper, which Schmidt-Soltau continued reading just the same, contained material such as the following:

The University of Buea is building a wall around their campus. Students and lecturers complain about the vast sum of money being used for this purpose....While students and the majority of lecturers supported by the elected mayor of Buea want to use their limited resources for an improvement of the terrible teaching facilities-for a library with books, for photocopy machines with paper and some new amphitheatres-the appointed university administration wants to use their money for their needs and interests. Some people adore academic excellence, others white elephants. There are different options of conflict management existing: In a dictatorial regime, the administration would just continue with their projects till eruptions and trembling break down their walls of ignorance and bum the paper tigers. Where a civil society waxes strong, the different sides would discuss till a resolution is found. (Schmidt-Soltau 1999:72-73)

Eventually Schmidt-Soltau was dismissed from the University of Buea. Underlined in the letter of termination was the complaint that

instead of promoting the fruitful co-operation which you indicated in your application of 1997, you have engaged not only in denigrating the authorities of Cameroon, including the Head of State, the entire nation of Cameroon and the University of Buea, but also in attempting to incite students and staff of our institution to violence through your barrage of insulting and tendentious newspaper articles and your lectures.... We find such impudence, calumny and subversion unacceptable. We are therefore constrained to terminate your part-time appointment at the University of Buea with immediate effect.... You are also informed that you are barred

from entering the campus of the University of Buea hence- forth.” (Schmidt-Soltau 1999:80)

The University authorities also rebuked the student officials of the OAU for inviting Schmidt-Soltau and asked that they write letters of apology to the governor and the Vice Chancellor. Ironically, the posting of this decision on the Internet and the lively debate it engendered gave the university international visibility. German newspapers carried stories of the dismissal. A likely long-term consequence will be the reluctance of foreign scholars to accept appointments at this institution.²⁴

The Schmidt-Soltau affair caused the UB administration to be wary of any projects designed by foreign scholars. Even programs meant to promote the professional development of UB's faculty and staff are not approved easily: this despite the emphasis in the university's strategic plan on professional development as the path that will enable tertiary institutions in Africa to help the continent deal with the challenges of globalization (Sawyer 1998:23). Mohan Aurora, a Commonwealth Exchange Scholar who tried to organize a workshop entitled “Finance for Non-Financial Executives,” had to wait six months to get the university's approval (personal communication, Jan. 12, 2000). Finding this long waiting period exasperating, Aurora threatened to leave the university, arguing that the Commonwealth should not be paying his salary for nothing. He also threatened to inform the Commonwealth Secretariat that UB did not have any need for exchange scholars. To preempt this move while at the same time guaranteeing that Aurora work on something innocuous, the university proposed that he develop a Ph.D. program in economics. Aurora wondered about the feasibility of such a project, given that he would be at the institution for only two years, that the department was not even offering master's degrees, and that it had only one other lecturer with a Ph.D. He eventually left prematurely, ostensibly for health reasons.

²⁴ This termination came just two weeks before the end of the semester. In effect, the authorities did not consider the prejudice that this would cause the university. They also reported Schmidt-Soltau to the police. The charges against him were grave enough warrant an order that he leave Cameroonian territory within twenty-four to forty-eight hours. As a mark of disapproval, the administration also removed the pictures of Schmidt-Soltau and Nantang Jua from the picture album of OAU day, where they would have been featured as participants in the historical development of the university.

Smarting from its experiences of the recent past, the university in 1998 refused to accept a Fulbright Scholar in the social sciences who had been assigned to UB, presumably because the VC had not indicated the need for this scholar. (An assistant to the Vice Chancellor, however, had indeed sent out such a request and there was, furthermore, an obvious need for this scholar on a faculty, the Faculty of Social and Management Sciences, that has only two associate professors. The Department of Sociology in which this professor would have taught does not have any.) The university, clearly, is micromanaged by certain individuals to the detriment of any participation or fluidity in its administration.²⁵

By trying to close itself off from the outside world, UB seems to have opted for an academic version of the Albanian solution, that is, to go it alone. Alternatively, the university is willing to accept foreign scholars in the social sciences if they are willing to submit to “tropicalization,” meaning, in this context, that they never criticize the host. Universities, however, especially research institutions, can survive and prosper only through cooperation and a sharing of resources regionally, nationally, and internationally (Sawyer 1998:24). Such activities are particularly crucial for a fledgling institution like UB, which, arguably, profits more from such programs than many of its partners. And for individuals, only through interaction with the “Other” can one “know oneself: “a product,” according to Gramsci, “of the historical process to date, which has deposited in you an infinity of traces, without leaving an inventory”(1977:324). University campuses, more than any other institutions, are supposed to be liminal spaces, sites par excellence of a democratic culture. The prevalence of this siege mentality at UB has contributed inordinately to the lack of transparency in its management. Opacity has crept even into sensitive realms such as promotions. Although texts outlining the requirements for promotion spell out the criteria, in practice contradictions abound. For example, for an assistant lecturer “with one incremental credit” to be promoted to the rank of lecturer, he or she has to have a PhD, one year of teaching experience at the University, and one

²⁵ According to Schmidt-Soltau (1999:88), “there is a Senate, but some members of the Senate tell me that everything is stage managed. They just have to raise their hands and clap and that is all.” Similarly, when the deputy vice chancellor for academic affairs was asked to comment on a so-called recruitment scandal that marred the beginning of the school year, the response was that only the vice chancellor was empowered to make any official declaration to the press; see the *Post*, October 25, 1999, p. 7

publication in an academic journal.²⁶ The text does not make any reference to pedagogic or administrative reports. While the former is certainly important and taken into consideration, it is really the latter that determines the candidate's fate. And because of the emphasis given the latter, most critical scholars have been denied promotion (Schmidt-Soltau 1999:82). In a recent case at UB, the dean of one of the faculties recommended that an assistant lecturer be denied promotion simply because of his militancy in SYNES. And some associate professors have applied for promotion to the rank of full professor-and have been approved-simply on the basis of their administrative positions. Practices such as these make a mockery of the official requirements for promotion. They privilege mediocrity, and nullify the idea of a university as a meritocracy. But as a hegemonic policy that is constantly renewed and recreated, these practices become part of the institutional culture.

Conclusion

Africa's contribution to global intellectual endeavours, though already negligible, continues to recede. The case study of Cameroon's University of Buea suggests that several factors contribute to this trend. Notable among these are the *étatization* of tertiary education, with its corollary being the absence of democratic policy-making on the part of scholars who are appointed by decree to administer this space. Preoccupation with the policing of this space, a space that has played an inordinate role in contributing to the thickening of civil society in other African countries, explains their intolerance of critical scholarship. Any window of opportunity, no matter how slight, that could lead to the production of this scholarship is closed. The routinization of symbolic violence-to wit (the threat of) desalarization and Kafkaesque trials before disciplinary committees-is also used as a deterrent. Young scholars are deprived of the chance for further training.

Besides the stick, carrots are also used. Among the latter are baits such as the promise of appointments, whose attractiveness is enhanced by the perception that this is the only means of upward mobility. The ultimate goal is the consolidation of a powerful administration that devalorizes critical scholarship and discourages its production, with a view to promoting social

²⁶ See Summary of Order 00004/MINESUP/CAB, January 19, 1998.

censorship. Recalcitrant academics find themselves experiencing a kind of social death.²⁷ In furtherance of this goal, institutions such as the University of Buea seem to opt for the isolationist Albanian solution in the realm of scholarship-and this in this age of globalization when the emphasis should be on collaboration in order to create poles of excellence. The cumulative effect of the foregoing is to discourage the creative tension that inspires the most important and most creative scholarship. Most scholarship that is produced in Cameroon, on the contrary, tends to be dead dogma, based on old, if not outmoded, constructs. Only the birth of a democratic culture that guarantees the de facto deregularization of this realm will bring life back into Cameroonian scholarship: a drastic change in the present climate, which allows only for an academic existence, not an academic life. Even as a footnote, we would also like to mention the positive correlation between Africa's marginalization, its declining geostrategic importance in world politics since the end of the Cold War, and its low purchase among publishers.²⁸ Because of the shift in focus of many publishing houses, those that factor in utilitarian considerations in their decision-making process are decreasing their exposure to Africa. Manuscripts from and on Africa, and especially country studies, whatever their merits, and even those that have value added to them by Western coauthorship, are considered as having a low market value.

²⁷ Seen through another prism, Cameroon might be understood as not having embarked on the path to modernity, which Brecht in *The Life of Galileo* identifies with the spirit of free research which always comes in conflict with the doctrinaire and the defence of established apparatuses of power (cited in Touraine1995:202).

²⁸ This is not to deemphasize the importance of this thesis. Rather, as a central concern in the academy, it deserves to be studied in detail.

Chapter 3

The University of Yaoundé as Ground Zero for the 2005 Student Protests in Cameroon

Introduction

Against the backdrop of rising shadow costs in the public university system in Cameroon, suspicion of impending fee hikes, and worsening living conditions on and off campus, the students of the University of Yaoundé I organised under the Cameroon Students' Rights Association (ADDEC) went on strike in April 2005. Given its historical position as the mother university in Cameroon and given its overarching demands for the betterment of students' conditions in Cameroonian higher education, this strike action, from the onset was bound to have national ramifications. Aware of the visibility which their position in the capital city endowed on their activities, ADDEC leaders opted for peaceful demonstrations as evidenced in their hunger strike on campus. Meanwhile, they were buoyed by fellow students who took to the streets with placards demanding that their problems be attended to.

The press reports in both French and English within this chapter provide a linear presentation of the evolution of the crisis at the University of Yaoundé I, as well as attempts by the university and government authorities to nip the strike in the bud. Curiously though, law enforcement came at the fore of the process of contestation with the immediate presence of police and gendarmes on the university campus. Meanwhile attempts at understanding and addressing the issues raised by the students came in second place. Playing important roles in the dialogue with the students were – the Rector of the University of Yaounde I, Professor Sammy Beban Chumbow; the Minister of Higher Education, Jacques Fame Ndongo; and the Prime Minister of the Republic of Cameroon, Ephraim Inoni.

Through newspaper reports, vivid insights also emerge on how the strike action snowballed to enrapture some professional higher education institutions in Yaoundé. However, the reports also evidence a lack of vision on the part of the university authorities who failed to appraise the full extent

of the demands made by ADDEC, as they sought to deal with the problem in Yaoundé without accounting for the potential volatility within the other six state universities.

Friday 22nd April 2005: University of Yaoundé I Pulls the trigger Yaoundé Varsity Students Take to the Streets

By Clovis Atah & Kini Nsom

Hundreds of students of the University of Yaoundé I, Wednesday, April 20, took to the streets in the Ngoa Ekelle neighbourhood obstructing traffic for several hours. Students first marched around campus at about midday before taking to the streets.



Striking University of Yaoundé I Students

They carried placards with messages of their grievances related both to conditions at the University of Yaoundé I and the general higher education system in Cameroon. Students who spoke to *The Post* said they don't have toilets and drinking water on campus. They said the university is charging all kinds of illegal fees, to add to the statutory registration fees of FCFA 50,000 that they want scrapped. They cited, for example, the FCFA 25 they are required to pay before getting access to the library, the FCFA 2000 they pay before attending tutorials and the money they must pay before having a transcript of their results. The striking students said the financial burden on them had become unbearable.

Some students also said they had reliable information that the government was planning to raise the registration fees from FCFA 50,000 to FCFA 75,000. This, they said, was unacceptable. They argued that the government's excuse for suppressing bursaries and introducing fees was because of the empty coffers of the state at the time. Now that the government has been claiming a growth rate averaging about 5 per cent for close to a decade, it means its coffers are full. It would, therefore, be logical for the government to scrap the FCFA 50,000 registration fees, the students argued.

At press time on Wednesday afternoon, police officers were trying to negotiate with students who had mounted a human barricade on the highway around Cité U. Students appeared very disciplined and orderly in their strike action, but the presence of police and gendarme officers caused some anxiety. In some cases, there were hot verbal exchanges between students and the forces of law and order.

Meanwhile, students chanted Anne Marie Nzie's popular music track, "Liberté" even as a police commissioner tried to persuade them to allow traffic to flow. "Enough is enough," the students retorted. On campus, almost half a dozen students belonging to the Cameroon Students' Rights Association, known by its French acronym, ADDEC, were on hunger strike outside the main administrative building. Hundreds of students gathered around their colleagues encouraging them and discussing what they described as the plight of university students today. Looking frail, the students on hunger strike lay on scraps of cartons on the floor.

Call for Strike

The Cameroon Students' Rights Association, ADDEC, posted notices on campus about two weeks ago, calling on students to go on strike. The notice called on students to boycott classes. Simultaneously, on April 12, ADDEC wrote a letter to the President of the Republic announcing a hunger strikes if he did not meet 11 demands, which they listed. Meanwhile, a pro-administration group, also calling itself ADDEC, dissociated itself from the strike call and asked students not to adhere to it. Incidentally, lecturers went on strike last week, heightening the students' sense of frustration.

On April 12, some members of ADDEC, notably Robinson Mouaffo Djontu, Karl Koiza, Ibrahim Mohammed, Gabriel Kuegne and Linjoum

Mbowou, went on hunger strike. They started at the seat of the Yaounde Archdiocese at Mvolye. The Archbishop sent them away after three days. They then moved to the National Commission of Human Rights and Freedoms and eventually to the Red Cross. But they were still sent away. On Tuesday, they transferred to the university campus. On Monday, students started boycotting classes at the University of Yaoundé I. On Tuesday morning, several hundreds of students gathered at the university campus sitting on the ground as a sign of protest. When the Rector failed to address them as they requested, the placard-carrying students marched around the campus before pouring into the streets.

Talking to *The Post*, one of the ADDEC leaders on hunger strike said the authorities, including the Minister of Higher Education and the Rector of the University of Yaoundé I, had tried to “corrupt” them but they resisted. They said the rival ADDEC group calling on students not to adhere to the strike action were former members of their group who had been “corrupted” by the university authorities. They said they would continue with their hunger strike that was on its eighth day on Wednesday, until the authorities addressed their demands.

The demands include, the scrapping of the FCFA 50,000 registration fees; the promulgation of a students’ statute; payment of bursaries to students on research and in professional schools; the convening of the Higher Education and Scientific Research Council; election of Rectors (Vice Chancellors), Deans and heads of all higher education institutions; upgrading of university hostels; the amelioration of university restaurants, amongst others.

The students on hunger strike complained that the authorities are trying to bully them to stop their hunger strike even though they have not addressed their demands. They said they met with the Minister of Higher Education in February, who promised to channel their problems to the Head of State. However, they were shocked that when the Head of State addressed the youths on Youth Day, he said nothing concrete about the plight of the Cameroonian student.

It would be recalled that the same ADDEC members went on a hunger strike prior to the October 11 2004 Presidential election to press candidates to commit themselves to address the problems of students, if they won. But most Presidential candidates including President Biya, took no notice of the striking students. Students who spoke to *The Post* said they intend to sustain

their strike until the authorities provide acceptable solutions to their problems. They called on students of the other state universities to join them. *The Post* learnt that a few classes held in the morning of Tuesday, but no other classes held when the strike became full-blown.

The Post tried to meet the Rector of the University of Yaoundé I, Prof. Sammy Beban Chumbow, for his reaction, but his Private Secretary said he had nothing to say to the press.

April 22, 2005 at 08:20 AM in [News](#) | [Permalink](#)

Comments

RE: Yaounde Varsity Students Take to the Streets

It's sure high time the government of Cameroon sees to the plight of University students. Sometimes when I sit and compare Universities here in the US and what we have in Cameroon, I feel ashamed. Cameroonian students are treated like dirt, all the university authorities care about is squeezing money out of the students. Look at the deteriorated structures of campuses, students asked to pay for tutorials and all that. What is happening to our educational system? Should we then complain when degrees granted by any of our state Universities are hardly regarded elsewhere? The students of Yaoundé I am sure are doing the right thing by striking. I call on all other students of the various state universities to follow suit so that things like the promulgation of students' statute, and better conditions for students can be achieved. It is our right as students to choose through election, Rectors and Deans of Faculties, people who would better represent our needs, not just academically, but socially, instead of having leaders who because they are appointed do not care about the plight of students. The time for matching words with action is due. The government of Cameroon should not sweep through this time around with promises of looking into the issues in the days ahead or using coercive measures to shut the students up. Something needs to be done and the time is now.

Ndze Ntuv Evaristus Tunka, Minnesota, USA

Posted by: [Ndze Ntuv Evaristus Tunka](#) | April 22, 2005 01:27 PM

The Yaoundé varsity student strike is a genuine one and would urge this action be given the attention it deserves in this age of “*démocratie avancée*”. As a culprit of the diabolic system in my days in that university, I’ll not be happy for these same students to undergo the same psychological torments we witnessed in the heydays of democracy in the early 90s. Cameroon is the only country where students are treated with impunity. How on earth can students be asked to pay for using a library? First and foremost, was the library created for demons and not students? Do these students even have the basics for healthy life sustenance conducive for academics? It is even a taboo to mention that students should pay for receiving lectures during tutorials which are meant for coaching and narrowing the student-teacher relationship in view of the massive numbers during regular lectures in the giant Amphitheatres. I know from experience that most doctoral students who teach during tutorials lack basic survival, life sustaining resources. It is therefore, the responsibility of the university to cater for the needs of these desperate fellows whom one would not actually blame for their malignancy. I wonder what the university administration is doing with the fees collected that they can’t even meet up with lecturers of tutorials. It is time for the government to act and restore the dignity of the Cameroonian student.

Posted by: [Ndingi](#) | April 22, 2005 02:13 PM

An organized, effectively led and clearly focused pro-democracy student movement would be indispensable in the next phase of the struggle to get rid of the evil French-imposed system. That would require a great deal of cooperation with the force that would be capable of unifying the diverse exponents of change. Lessons should be learnt from the past which showed the weaknesses of the student movement. The errors should be addressed and resolve must be built. The moment to strike would be when the students and society in general cease from being just unhappy and become wrathful. That would also be when the system and the regime in power commit an inexcusable crime against the people. They got away with many inexcusable crimes before, but with an effective organization and proper timing, the exponents of change of which the students are an indispensable part would bring down this system. Keep up the demands my dear young compatriots. I am proud of you guys picking up the student struggle after a decade in the

doldrums. In the link below is an assessment of the mistakes to be avoided, from an analysis of the student movement of the 1990s.

www.icicemac.com/nouvelle/index.php3?nid=3413 [link not functional at writing of paper]

Posted by: [Janvier Tchouteu](#) | April 22, 2005 02:14 PM

I want to thank the leaders of that strike action. I know that Biya and his corrupt government will not act until you get on them. Peaceful demonstration and strike actions are the present wind of change that is blowing around the globe. Let Mr John Fru Ndi and the SDF learn from these students. If you care so much about the plight of Cameroonians, you will not allow elections to be stolen and you sit and watch. Fri Ndi had the guts to pick on a newspaper vendor, but he will allow Biya to stay. Is that not funny?

Posted by: [Rev M L Rene](#) | April 22, 2005 06:13 PM

Le Quotidien Mutations du VENDREDI, 22 AVRIL, 2005 - 07:17

Société : Grève : Ephraïm Inoni négocie avec les étudiants

Des étudiants tabassés et interpellés par les forces de l'ordre. Le recteur s'enfuit devant la pression des manifestants. La grève de la faim se poursuit.

Par Jules Romuald Nkonlak

Tension : Des gendarmes sur le campus

Le mouvement de protestation des étudiants s'est poursuivi hier, paralysant l'Université de Yaoundé I. Il y a eu une détonation, de la fumée, des cris et une multitude d'interprétations. Coups de feu tirés à l'endroit des étudiants, coups de feu en l'air, ou plutôt grenades lacrymogènes. En fait, il s'agissait plus de la troisième éventualité. Et la foule d'étudiants qui s'étaient retrouvés en face des éléments de la police postés à l'entrée de l'Université de Yaoundé I, a appliqué vers l'intérieur du campus, dans une mêlée confuse.

La deuxième journée du soulèvement des étudiants de l'Université de Yaoundé I, hier, a été particulièrement mouvementée. La veille déjà, la route qui passe devant l'université a été barrée par les manifestants. Autour de 9h, un attroupement s'est formé devant le rectorat. Mais, le maître des lieux, Sammy Beban Chumbow, n'a pas fait signe de vie.

La décision a donc été prise de se mettre en route, comme la veille, vers les services du Premier ministre. "Ils ont sorti les enseignants et les étudiants des salles de classes", relate un responsable de l'institution. Les cours se sont donc arrêtés et n'ont pas repris du reste de la journée. A l'Ecole normale supérieure aussi, comme la veille, la troupe de mécontents a fait escale, mettant aussi un terme à tous les cours qui y étaient dispensés à ce moment-là. Pourtant, les grévistes n'iront pas plus loin. Stoppés au niveau de l'Ecole nationale d'administration et de magistrature par une escouade du groupement mobile d'intervention (Gmi).

C'est là qu'aura lieu le premier affrontement de la journée entre les étudiants et les forces de l'ordre. Quelques étudiants seront blessés et d'autres interpellés. Messi Mballa, membre de l'Association pour la défense des droits des étudiants (Addec), l'un des meneurs de la marche, sera d'ailleurs, d'après les dires de ses camarades, l'un des blessés. Toutefois, on ne pourra pas le voir. Quant à Eric Koizah, gréviste de la faim, il est revenu s'allonger à l'entrée de l'AMPHI 300, où il est massé par quelques-uns de ses camarades. Peu avant midi, tous les manifestants sont revenus sur le campus. Devant le rectorat, où ils demandent à nouveau après le recteur Sammy Beban Chumbow. L'une des chansons qu'ils entonnent d'ailleurs par moments, est fort suggestive. "Le gros Chumbow a trop mangé. Regardez son ventre.... Hibou hibou hibou là la..." Aucun doute, à ce moment-là, que les étudiants en veulent vraiment à leur recteur. Ce qui va se confirmer quelque temps plus tard, quand, Sammy Beban Chumbow sortira de son bureau par l'arrière.

Course

Il s'en suit une course folle. Le recteur, pourchassé par une horde d'étudiants en furie, accélère le pas. Alors même qu'il est installé dans son véhicule, ses poursuivants n'abandonnent pas leur chasse à l'homme, tout en criant des slogans vengeurs. C'est l'intervention des forces de l'ordre qui les fera finalement reprendre leur course en sens inverse. Sur le campus, les AMPHIs sont déserts. Les enseignants et autres responsables se sont

enfermés dans leurs bureaux, attendant que les choses se calment. “Il faut que les cours reprennent” nous dit un responsable du rectorat.

Les entrées principales du campus seront bloquées jusqu’aux environs de 18h. La route aussi, mais cette fois par des véhicules de la police, garés au lieu dit “château”. Le rectorat aussi est resté gardé par les éléments de la gendarmerie. Ils y étaient encore à la tombée de la nuit. Au moment même où une délégation de grévistes arrivait, en compagnie d’Ibrahim Nji Kouotou, membre du comité central du Rdpc et ancien député du Noun, aux services du Premier ministre où ils ont été invités. Les représentants des grévistes ont été reçus par le Premier ministre Inoni Ephraïm, en présence du ministre de l’Enseignement supérieur, Jacques Fame Ndong, et du recteur de l’Université de Yaoundé I, Sammy Beban Chumbow. Au moment où nous allions sous presse, les résolutions de cette rencontre étaient encore attendues.

Le mouvement de protestation des étudiants a commencé par une grève de la faim des membres de l’Addec, qui revendiquent l’amélioration de leurs conditions d’étude. Particulièrement la suppression des frais de scolarité, le paiement des bourses aux étudiants en cycle de recherche, ainsi que la fin des divers rançonnements dont ils sont victimes de la part des enseignants. “Ces doléances sont irréalisables pour le moment”, affirme un collaborateur du recteur, qui poursuit en disant que le coût annuel pour la formation d’un étudiant est bien plus élevé que 50 000 F CFA.

Le Quotidien Mutations du VENDREDI, 22 AVRIL, 2005 - 07:10

Société : Grévistes : L’aliment de la révolte estudiantine

Jean Baptiste Ketchateng

Les six jeunes qui refusent toute nourriture attirent les regards sur le campus de Ngoa-Ekellé.

Les parents de Mouaffo Djontu ne sont pas venus le chercher comme le demandait le recteur de l’université de Yaoundé I, Sammy Beban Chumbow, au début du mouvement de révolte des étudiants mercredi dernier. Même s’ils l’avaient fait, le président de l’Association de défense des droits des étudiants camerounais (Addec), ne serait certainement pas rentré à la maison.

Ce jeune homme de 28 ans, au physique solide, étudiant en quatrième année de chimie, compte en effet parmi les plus engagés des étudiants qui ont commencé une grève de la faim depuis 10 jours pour certains.

Ses cinq autres camarades, Eric Koizah, Gabriel Keugni, Ibrahim Mohaman, Ahmed Messi Mballa (à l'hôpital à la suite de violences policières) et Linjuom Mbowou qui l'y a accompagné, ne semblent pas moins déterminés, malgré leur état de fatigue visible. Ibrahim Mohaman par exemple, 25 ans, avec la légère écume blanche qui se dessinait sur le pourtour de sa bouche, se retournait avec une certaine peine sur le matelas qui lui sert de couchette devant l'Amphithéâtre 300 du campus de Ngoa-Ekellé. Le verbe difficilement audible de cet étudiant en deuxième année de mathématiques ne sert pas seulement à répéter les raisons de leur grève.

La principale, est la suppression des 50.000 FCFA qui constituent les frais d'inscription dans les universités publiques. Et les étudiants qui apprennent que leurs camarades affalés là se font violence pour obtenir des logements universitaires décents, et un meilleur service de restauration, ils sont moins nombreux, parmi les grappes humaines qui les encerclent presque en permanence, à les regarder comme des bêtes curieuses.

Mais cela ne fait pas de Mouaffo Djontu un leader étudiant suivi. Ainsi quand la soldatesque charge la foule d'étudiants et tire des gaz lacrymogènes, il aura du mal à obtenir de ses camarades qu'ils ne répondent pas à la violence par la violence. "Ils veulent que nous passions pour des voyous, il ne faut pas tomber dans leur piège", clame Gabriel Keugni, l'un des affamés volontaires. Les étudiants qui militent pour la non-violence triment avec leur unique aliment, de l'eau minérale, des bibles et une biographie de Martin Luther King. Et s'ils assurent être prêts à aller jusqu'où "le corps pourra le supporter", quelque différence se fait jour dans leurs visées ultimes.

Ibrahim Mohaman, espère aussi que par cette grève, il contribuera à faire "avancer la situation politique du Cameroun". Cet ancien élève du lycée de Mokolo à l'Extrême-Nord, diffère de ce point de vue de Gabriel Keugni. Lui ne craint pas risquer sa vie dans cette grève. "Si nous mourons ici, nous aurons donné un sens à notre mort", soutient-il en arguant que des étudiants meurent tous les jours du fait de leurs mauvaises conditions de vie.

Une fin que les étudiants qui découvraient pour beaucoup les grévistes de l'Addec et le mouvement de contestation à Ngoa-Ekellé, n'envisagent pas certainement de la même manière. Les groupes de concertation spontanément constitués sur le parvis de l'Amphithéâtre, prenaient ainsi ses

décisions sans véritablement se préoccuper des grévistes de la faim, qui attirent pourtant la foule. Eux-mêmes, trouvaient simplement quelque énergie à répondre aux questions de la presse.

Le Quotidien Mutations du VENDREDI, 22 AVRIL, 2005 - 07:09

Société : Regard : Avenir

Alain B. Batongué

Au Cameroun, c'est comme si l'histoire est toujours amenée à se répéter. Comme si les erreurs et les mauvaises appréciations d'hier n'ont jamais servi à préparer demain. Comme si chaque fois qu'on est coincé par une situation, on ne cherche pas à se remettre en question, mais on accuse les autres de manipulation politique. Les étudiants, principalement ceux de l'université de Yaoundé I, ont donc décidé de faire un sit-in devant les services du Premier ministre, pour exprimer leur ras-le-bol devant une situation académique de plus en plus difficile. Et comme d'habitude, les pouvoirs publics ont fait semblant de ne rien voir. Ni le recteur de l'université de Yaoundé I, qui a préféré ne pas aller au bureau.

Ni le ministre de l'Enseignement supérieur, étonnamment absent de la scène pendant toutes ces tensions. Jusqu'à ce qu'on constate le fameux "trouble à l'ordre public", et qu'on leur envoie les forces de l'ordre. Il a fallu que la situation se désagrège complètement pour que le Pm, sans doute passablement exacerbé, accepte de les recevoir tard dans la soirée.

Il est pourtant évident que ces étudiants-là, de Yaoundé I comme de toutes les autres universités d'Etat, ont des problèmes quasi identiques. Et qu'ils le rappellent depuis de nombreuses années maintenant, au sein d'un système universitaire transformé de fond en comble à la faveur de la réforme de janvier 1993 (autant par son accès, désormais payant, que par son système d'évaluation) qui, depuis lors, n'a plus jamais fait l'objet d'aucune évaluation, alors même qu'entre temps, de nombreux dysfonctionnements étaient apparus.

Pour l'essentiel, les préoccupations de ces milliers d'étudiants, sans aucun débouché lorsqu'ils auront eu leurs diplômes, sont donc réels et jusqu'à présent, personne n'y a véritablement prêté une oreille attentive. Qu'on le veuille ou non, les manifestations des étudiants, revendiquant une

amélioration de leurs conditions de travail, ont désormais pris une connotation politique. La reprise du dossier par le Premier ministre l'atteste. Parce que, au fond, le recteur ou le ministre pouvait difficilement faire face aux problèmes dont le règlement ne dépendait pas de leurs maigres ressources budgétaires qui, ces dernières années, n'étaient même pas toujours disponibles. On ne le sait sans doute pas toujours, mais les budgets des rectorats se réduisaient aux uniques frais de scolarité (50.000 CFA par étudiant), la subvention de l'Etat étant devenue, du fait des tensions de la trésorerie de l'Etat, pour le moins fantomatiques.

Pour autant, on est mal à l'aise que les pouvoirs publics brandissent aujourd'hui l'argument de la manipulation des étudiants par certains hommes politiques. Un argument un peu trop facile pour être pertinent, dans la mesure où, comme on le sait, il est même normal, comme cela se passe dans d'autres pays, que l'opposition soit toujours proche des revendications populaires ou syndicales. On aura du mal, certes, à ne pas être suspicieux lorsque les revendications des étudiants débordent du simple cadre académique. Mais pourquoi forcément y voir les conseils nauséux d'un homme politique aigri ou les calculs sombres de quelques enseignants oubliés dans les placards de la République ?

Au surplus, il peut simplement s'agir une stratégie de négociation, qui autorise à placer la barre très haut pour obtenir le minimum vital. Et de toute évidence, les exigences n'auraient jamais atteint ce stade, et donc ce niveau de tension sociale, si des solutions avaient été apportées, progressivement, dans la bonne foi et l'honnêteté, aux problèmes de cette jeunesse estudiantine déroutée et sans avenir. Mais doit-on en vérité s'étonner de cette politique de l'autruche qui est la caractéristique du gouvernement camerounais ? Aurait-il été possible que des actes soient posés, afin que l'histoire ne se répète pas ?

Le Quotidien Mutations du MARDI, 26 AVRIL, 2005 - 07:23

Société : Université de Yaoundé I : Les grévistes plus nombreux

Les cours n'ont pas repris hier. Les manœuvres du Minesup mises à nu. Les grévistes de la faim internés au Chu.

Jean-Bruno Tagne (Stagiaire)

Yaoundé I

Les étudiants défient le gouvernement

Les cours n'ont pas eu lieu hier, malgré l'appel du ministre de l'Enseignement supérieur.



Le mot d'ordre de grève des étudiants a bien été respecté hier lundi 25 avril 2005, sur le campus de l'université de Yaoundé I. Pendant le week-end, Mouaffo, le président de l'Association pour la défense des droits des étudiants (Addec) les avait appelé à venir nombreux, vêtus de noir. Hier, dès 7h au campus de Ngoa-Ekellé, ils étaient plusieurs milliers, vêtus de noir ou portant un bandeau noir sur le bras. Massés devant l'AMPHI 300 et le rectorat, ils donnent de la voix à travers des chansons expressives : "Fame Ndong, vient faire cours", "Chumbow va passer, Fame Ndong va passer, mais l'étudiant ne passera pas..."

Toutes ces chansons sont scandées au rythme des pas de danse bien cadencés.

Ils tiennent aussi des palmes et de nombreuses plaques sur les quelles des messages ont été hâtivement rédigés à la craie blanche ou au charbon. "Fameux Ndong, la poignée d'étudiants ultra minoritaires vous saluent", "ô secours Benoit XVI", "Pourquoi on n'aime pas les étudiants ?", peut-on lire. Au milieu de ces milliers d'étudiants, Mouaffo prend la parole. Tel un tribun, il parle à ses camarades qui l'écoutent religieusement. De temps en temps, ils l'applaudissent. "Nous les étudiants sommes la lumière de ce pays et nous allons le faire savoir. Notre combat est légitime et nous n'avons pas à

craindre !”, dit-il d’une voix affaiblie par 13 jours de grève de la faim. Après quelques minutes, épuisées, il retourne se coucher sur un matelas devant l’AMPHI 300 où il dort depuis bientôt deux semaines en compagnie de ses camarades. Les autres étudiants, au pas de course et en chantant, font le tour du campus. Pas un seul étudiant dans les AMPHIs, ni l’ombre d’un enseignant.

Dans les conversations des étudiants, la sortie du ministre de l’Enseignement supérieur sur la CRTV vendredi dernier, reste le principal sujet. “Le ministre a été très arrogant et ignorant de l’université dont il prétend être le chef. Le restaurant ne coûte pas 100FRS CFA ! De toutes les façons, il a grillé sa carte et nous ne sommes plus à son niveau. C’est le Premier ministre désormais”, lance un d’eux. La seule fille des grévistes de la faim, Carole Tchatchouang, pense que leur manifestation est une démonstration de la force et de la détermination des étudiants. “Nous avons voulu que les gars viennent montrer à l’administration camerounaise, à l’opinion nationale et internationale que nous ne sommes pas une minorité... l’université de Yaoundé I qui est la mère des universités est en deuil... La grève va persister jusqu’à ce que le gouvernement nous respecte et nous traite en grands !”

Soa

Au rectorat, le professeur Samy Beban Chumbow recteur de l’université, guète les manifestations à travers la fenêtre de son secrétariat. Il ne manifeste pas beaucoup d’enthousiasme à recevoir la presse. Des sources internes à son service indiquent qu’il aurait donné l’ordre aux gendarmes de disperser les étudiants. Lesquels ont refusé en arguant l’incompétence de ce dernier à leur donner un tel ordre, surtout que l’option de non-violence de la grève des étudiants est scrupuleusement respectée. 11h. Une quête est organisée pour ravitailler les grévistes de la faim en eau. Avec beaucoup d’enthousiasme, les étudiants mettent la main à la poche. Ce qui permet d’acheter 4 palettes d’eau minérale. Infatigables, ils continuent de chanter et de courir sur le campus. Dans les rangs, on parle de quelques étudiants, venus de l’université de Yaoundé II à Soa (Faculté des sciences économiques) pour apporter leur soutien à leurs camarades.

Subitement, on aperçoit un étudiant, tout de noir vêtu, grimper sur le toit de l'AMPHI 300. Il plante un drapeau noir. Ses camarades exultent et entonnent l'hymne national.

A un moment donné, une ambulance du Samu arrive sur le campus. La santé de Mouaffo et de deux de ses camarades s'est détériorée. Sur de applaudissements nourris de ses camarades, il monte à bord du véhicule qui ne peut pas bouger. Les étudiants soupçonnent Fame Ndongo d'avoir "envoyé cette ambulance pour enlever les gars". Une longue discussion s'en suit entre les étudiants. Finalement le car s'ébranle vers le Chu, suivi par des milliers d'étudiants sur près de 500 m. Seule la pluie qui s'est abattue sur le campus vers 14h30 disperse les étudiants qui promettent de "remettre ça demain". Selon des informations recueillies au téléphone auprès du responsable de la communication du Minesup, le ministre Jacques Fame Ndongo, serait allé au Chu, au chevet des grévistes de la faim. Cette même source indique qu'avant toute levée du mot d'ordre de grève, Mouaffo et ses camarades ont demandé à consulter leur base.

Le Quotidien Mutations : Société du MARDI, 26 AVRIL, 2005 - 07:15
Par Junior Binyam

Diversión

Dans l'incapacité d'apporter des solutions tangibles aux revendications estudiantines, "diviser pour mieux régner", maxime mise en application dans des situations insurrectionnelles, semble occuper une place de choix dans la stratégie du ministre de l'Enseignement supérieur pour remédier à la grève qui paralyse le campus de Ngoa-Ekellé. Il est question de fragiliser les grévistes en essayant aux yeux de leurs camarades de les mettre en minorité en les présentant comme des marginaux. Et, minorer leur influence aux yeux de l'opinion en remettant en cause leur légitimité. Jusqu'ici les différentes initiatives allant dans ce sens ont tourné court.

On note même comme un effet boomerang, puisqu'on assiste à l'augmentation des effectifs des étudiants qui manifestent sur le campus aux côtés des leaders, membres de l'Association pour la défense des droits des étudiants camerounais, Addec.

La dernière en date, dont il ne fait pas de doute qu'elle a été impulsée par les services du Minesup qui se sont chargés de la ventilation du communiqué, est cette déclaration lue hier par un étudiant de la faculté des Lettres, sur les antennes du poste national de la CRTV en prime-time au journal de 13h. La déclaration a été rediffusée tout le reste de la journée lors des journaux parlés de la CRTV. Le porte-parole des délégués d'étudiants a exhorté ses camarades "à reprendre le cours normal de la vie estudiantine." Ce qui n'a rien changé à la réalité de la situation sur le campus puisque ces délégués dont le processus de désignation est brumeux sont généralement contestés et soupçonnés par leurs camarades de collusion avec l'administration.

Dimanche 24 avril, au cours du magazine d'information "Dimanche midi", toujours sur le poste national de la CRTV, ce sont trois étudiants, qui disent être ceux jouissant de la légitimité pour parler au nom de l'Addec, qui ont, sur les ondes, invité leurs camarades à reprendre les cours conformément à l'appel de Jacques Fame Ndong. Pour étayer cette position, ils ont parfois repris à leur compte un argumentaire similaire à celui usité par le Minesup au cours du point de presse donné vendredi dernier sur la CRTV-télé. René Bonono Bakota, Gaston Albert Efandene, Luc Christian Mballa n'ont pas dissimulé quelques accointances avec un très proche collaborateur du Minesup. Celui-ci se trouvait comme par enchantement à la sortie du studio-radio au moment où le président de l'Addec, son secrétaire général et son conseiller avaient fini de délivrer leur message. La tentative de remettre au goût du jour le fait qu'une grève estudiantine est liée à une manipulation de politiciens à laquelle il fallait répondre par une autre en créant un clan antagoniste, sur la base d'un argumentaire ethno-tribal, comme dans les années 90 avec "le parlement" et "l'auto-défense", semble avoir vécu.

Le Quotidien Mutations : Politique du MARDI, 26 AVRIL, 2005 - 07:10
Jacques Fame Ndongo Le prof va-t-il valider les corps ?
Le nouveau Minesup sur les braises de la grève des étudiants.
Alain B. Batongué

La semaine dernière n'a pas été de tout repos pour le ministre de l'Enseignement supérieur, retiré du Mincom le 08 décembre dernier, au moment où des dossiers relatifs à la communication sociale commençaient à s'enliser. Il a piloté lui-même, pendant toute la semaine, le colloque sur "Haïti, première République noire : le regard de l'Afrique contemporaine", où il a eu l'honneur d'entretenir des sommités comme Amadou Mathar Mbow, ancien directeur général de l'Unesco. C'est d'ailleurs en plein hôtel Hilton qu'il a essuyé les premières salves de ce qui devait devenir la grève des étudiants de l'université de Yaoundé I, regroupés au sein de l'Addec.

Passé le premier contact officiel avec les grévistes, devant le Premier ministre, Inoni Ephraïm qui avait convoqué jeudi tard dans la soirée une palabre toute camerounaise, il s'est retrouvé au front dès le lendemain, en compagnie de Pierre Moukoko Mbonjo, le ministre de la Communication, à qui il avait fait l'amitié de prendre part, quatre jours plus tôt, à la cérémonie d'ouverture d'un atelier international sur la "Presse privée et la responsabilité sociale". Ils étaient tous les deux devant les journalistes vendredi dernier, et ont bien demandé aux hommes de médias de se souvenir de leur... responsabilité sociale, en expliquant à l'opinion publique "la vraie situation de ce qui se passe à l'université de Yaoundé I".

Mais Jacques Fame Ndongo, après quelques coups de fil ça et là, a dû prendre la route pour Sangmelima où il était attendu, au cours d'un meeting politique samedi, en tant que ministre originaire du Sud, pour la grande parade organisée pour dire merci à Paul Biya, président de la République. De sources proches du Minesup, même s'il avait déjà annoncé que les cours reprendraient sur le campus de Ngoa Ekéllé dès lundi, "il n'a pas perdu une minute de ce qui se passait à Yaoundé, de ce que tramaient les étudiants grévistes".

Et comment pouvait-il en être autrement ? Jacques Fame Ndongo est resté la fin manœuvrière qui a dérouté tant d'adversaires, au sein même du Rdpc, le parti au pouvoir. Il a ainsi monopolisé sur place à Yaoundé quelques hommes sûrs qui se sont, opportunément, souvenus de ce qu'au sein même de l'Addec, il y avait des membres d'hier, entrés en dissidence et qui

pouvaient être utiles. Ne se sont-ils pas, à bord de la voiture d'un des plus proches collaborateurs du ministre, présentés à l'émission dominicale dimanche midi, avant de se rendre au siège du quotidien gouvernemental Cameroon Tribune par les mêmes moyens ?

Adieu au Mincom

Rentré à Yaoundé tard dimanche soir, il a encore fait le point avec ses principaux collaborateurs et, malgré son annonce dans les locaux de la CRTV, il n'a pas été surpris, en homme de terrain, de constater que la grève se poursuivait, hier matin. C'est encore lui que l'on a vu en début d'après-midi au chevet des grévistes de la faim, subitement pris de malaises et rapidement conduits aux urgences du Centre hospitalier universitaire (Chu) dont il est encore, simple coïncidence, président du conseil d'administration. Sa double qualité a aidé à faire des prises en charge rapides pour les malades, avant de se porter sur d'autres fronts de cette grève qui risque fort de mettre plus de temps que prévu.

Ceux qui s'imaginaient qu'il coulerait au Minesup des jours heureux, après l'agitation du ministère de la Communication, vont devoir réviser leurs positions. Et si, là-bas, il n'aura pas toujours l'occasion de publier ses communiqués fleuves en réaction à quelque déclaration jugée offensante contre le régime de Paul Biya qu'il dit soutenir "de tout cœur" (le cardinal Tumi en a certainement gardé un excellent souvenir), il y a déjà apporté sa touche personnelle, qui dégoulinait du communiqué lu hier sur les ondes des médias d'Etat par des "délégués des étudiants" sortis de nulle part : il y magnifie les vertus de la coordination et de la concertation, parle de la possibilité de la mise sur pied d'un fonds de ceci ou de cela, mais n'engage le gouvernement sur aucune action concrète à mettre en œuvre dans les prochains jours...

Des journées marathon, des nuits sans sommeil, entrecoupées de coups de fil autant sur son téléphone portable que sur le téléphone fixe de son domicile de Bastos. Mais on parie que Jacques Fame Ndongso préfère, de loin, cette vie difficile de ministre régulièrement aux charbons, où il peut se faire apprécier comme un bras séculier du régime depuis ce jour de mars 2000 où il fut nommé ministre de la communication; à celle plus douillette et plus discrète de conseiller du président de la République en matière de Communication (poste où il n'a jamais été remplacé), ou même à celle de

directeur de l'ESSTIC, où il officia pendant une dizaine d'années, après y avoir été propulsé à l'âge de 33 ans; ou encore d'éphémère recteur de cette même université de Yaoundé I, jadis mieux "contrôlée", et aujourd'hui théâtre de tant d'agitation. Mais ce n'est pas lui qui s'en plaindra. Mourir "au choc", mourir "pour défendre les idées du président", y aurait-il quelque chose de plus galvanisant pour lui ?

Le Quotidien Mutations : Société du MERCREDI, 27 AVRIL, 2005 - 07:21

Jean-Bruno Tagne (Stagiaire)

Grève

Les renforts arrivent de Soa

Les étudiants de l'université de Yaoundé II augmentent les effectifs à Ngoa-Ekellé.

Le drapeau noir des étudiants flottait encore joyeusement hier, 26 avril 2005, au-dessus de Jérusalem, l'AMPHI 300, ainsi qu'il est baptisé depuis le début de la grève des étudiants de l'université de Yaoundé I. Dès 8h, de nombreux étudiants étaient déjà massés devant cet endroit pour prendre "la bonne information". Les choses ont quelque peu changé. Aux messages hâtivement rédigés sur des cartons à la craie blanche ou au charbon, se sont substitués des textes saisis et imprimés sur du papier au format A3. "La seule source d'information fiable se trouve devant l'AMPHI 300. L'Addec n'a rien signé avec qui que ce soit", "CRTV, manipule comme tu veux, mais ne tente pas les étudiants."

Dans la foule, les étudiants veulent en avoir le Sur net par rapport aux informations diffusées par la CRTV la veille, au sujet de la levée du mot d'ordre de grève. A ce sujet, le porte-parole de l'Association pour la défense des droits des étudiants du Cameroun (Addec) est ferme : "la grève se poursuit. N'écoutez plus la CRTV. C'est devant l'AMPHI 300 que la grève sera levée." A ces mots, les étudiants applaudissent à tout rompre.

9h. On annonce sur le campus l'arrivée de deux grévistes de la faim qui viennent de quitter le Centre hospitalier universitaire (Chu) où ils ont été internés la veille. Il s'agit de Mouaffo et Linjuom. Ils sont portés en triomphe par des milliers de camarades.

Sans répit, Mouaffo, le président de l'Addec est appelé à s'expliquer sur leur rencontre avec le ministre de l'Enseignement supérieur la veille. "Le ministre a dit qu'il nous demandait pardon au cas où il aurait mal agit. Il nous a demandé de signer l'arrêt de la grève. Nous lui avons dit non. Parce que en ce moment nous avons, pointé sur nous, deux revolvers: celui de la masse d'étudiants que vous êtes et celui du gouvernement. Mais nous craignons plus les étudiants parce que c'est avec vous que nous vivons au quotidien", dit-il, tout en maintenant sur sa poitrine une bible qui ne le quitte pas depuis le début de la grève. Dans la foulée, ils mettent fin à leur grève de la faim et, symboliquement ils mangent un bout de pain et le tour du campus au pas de course peut reprendre.

ESSTIC

Dans la journée, une cinquantaine d'étudiants de Yaoundé II arrivent et manifestent bruyamment leur solidarité à l'égard de leurs camarades de Yaoundé I. Ils se retirent par la suite dans une salle de l'annexe de l'IRIC pour la préparation d'un mémorandum. On apprend en même temps que, informé de la circulation d'un mémorandum des étudiants de l'Ecole supérieure des sciences et techniques de l'information et de la communication (ESSTIC), le recteur de l'université de Yaoundé II, Jean Tabi Manga, a dépêché des gens dans cette école pour défricher et y enlever toutes les ordures. Il aurait également débloqué de l'argent pour l'aménagement des toilettes.

Alors que, fatigués, les étudiants quittent déjà le campus, les grévistes de la faim sont informés par les services du Minesup de l'arrivée du ministre sur le campus. Après des concertations avec quelques étudiants encore présents sur le campus, ils décident de refuser la visite du ministre. "C'est un piège. Pourquoi il n'est pas venu le matin quand nous étions tous là. S'il vient maintenant, la CRTV va filmer et dire que nous sommes minoritaires pas question qu'ils viennent demain", suggère fermement un étudiant qui assiste à la conversation téléphonique entre Mouaffo et un responsable des services du Minesup. "Grand frère, dis à ton boss que les gars ont refusé et je ne signe rien !", lance Mouaffo à son interlocuteur au téléphone. Du côté du rectorat, le conseil de l'université qui a débuté depuis la mi-journée se poursuit. A l'ordre du jour des travaux, figure la grève des étudiants de cette université. Il

s'agit pour les responsables de l'université et quelques délégués de facultés de trouver des voies de sortie de crise.

Le Quotidien Mutations : Société du VENDREDI, 29 AVRIL, 2005 - 07:39

Yaoundé : Le front s'élargit

Jules Romuald Nkonlak

L'ESSTIC, l'Ecole normale et Polytechnique grossissent les rangs

L'air de Tiken Jah Fakoly, "Le pays va mal", va plutôt bien aux étudiants en grève à l'université de Yaoundé I. Ils le diffusent ou le chantent en boucle depuis que leur manifestation a définitivement pris pied sur le campus de Ngoa Ekellé. Et le son, craché par les hauts parleurs installés à l'AMPHI 300, rebaptisé Jérusalem pour la circonstance, est une indication, pour celui qui arrive, que la grève n'a pas pris fin. Hier, au lendemain de la journée mémorable qui a vu le ministre de l'Enseignement supérieur, Jacques Fame Ndongo, et le recteur de l'université de Yaoundé I, Sammy Beban Chumbow, subir, en même temps que les étudiants les assauts de la pluie sur le campus, on s'attendait plus ou moins à une baisse de régime. La journée a cependant eu sa part de nouveauté.

Le ralliement des étudiants de l'Ecole supérieure des sciences et techniques de l'information et de la communication (ESSTIC), et de l'Ecole nationale supérieure polytechnique, notamment. Les étudiants de l'Ecole normale supérieure (ENS), qui étaient déjà présents la veille, sont revenus en force, en nombre plus grand aussi, manifester leur solidarité au mouvement déclenché, une semaine plus tôt par l'Association pour la défense des droits des étudiants du Cameroun (Addec). Il y a eu aussi des constances. Le tour du campus en criant le slogan "ça va changer", sous la conduite de Mouaffo Djontu, le président de l'Addec, qui a repris quelques forces depuis qu'il a recommencé à manger.

Le journal de 13h, comme la veille et l'avant-veille aussi, a été écouté en public. Ponctué par les cris d'espoir d'abord, à l'annonce d'un conseil de cabinet présidé par le Premier ministre au cours duquel Jacques Fame Ndongo a évoqué la crise à l'université. De déception ensuite, lorsque aucune

mesure concrète n'a été annoncée. "Le problème c'est les 50.000", crie quelqu'un. Une pancarte s'élève sur laquelle on lit : "Adieu tapioca".

Cooptation

Mais, les conversations, comme les esprits, sont restés surtout tournés vers la rencontre prévue dès 9h ce matin entre le ministre de l'Enseignement supérieur et trente représentants de l'Addec. La journée d'hier a surtout consisté à la préparation de cette rencontre, "au processus de cooptation" des trente représentants, comme l'a signalé Linjuom Mbowou, l'un des grévistes de la faim. Mouaffo Djontu, quant-à lui, a fait savoir qu'il ne ferait pas partie de l'expédition et qu'il attendrait sur place, à "Jérusalem", pour signer quoi que ce soit. "Ils peuvent prendre tout l'argent qu'ils veulent, mais la décision c'est ici", précise un autre gréviste.

Toutefois, on ne serait pas surpris que les revendications qui seront formulées aujourd'hui ne soient plus nombreuses que celles contenues dans le mémorandum de l'Addec. Devant le bâtiment principal de l'ESSTIC, une pancarte posait déjà un tout autre problème, spécifique à cette institution "ni micro, ni caméra". Une situation mentionnée, en même temps que le problème de l'intégration à la fonction publique, dans le mémorandum que les étudiants en communication sont allés déposer hier aux services du Premier ministre.

"Chairman De Christian Essoh" le représentant des grévistes de l'ENS précise qu'ils sont certes solidaires des revendications de l'Addec, mais qu'ils iront à la rencontre avec le ministre, munis de leurs préoccupations spécifiques : "La procédure d'intégration après notre formation est longue. Nous passons jusqu'à trois années sur le terrain sans salaire. Le restaurant de l'Ecole normale ne fonctionne que sur le papier..."

Les revendications se multiplient donc en fonction des établissements des grévistes et on imagine que la tâche ne sera pas la plus aisée pour le gouvernement qui s'est d'ores et déjà engagé dans le processus de négociation. Une rencontre était annoncée dans l'après-midi d'hier entre le ministre de l'Enseignement supérieur et les recteurs des universités d'Etat. Pour Linjuom Mbowou, les étudiants iront négocier avec un esprit de fermeté et d'ouverture.

Conclusion

Using different newspapers both in French and English, the chapter has examined the University of Yaounde as the first to have started the wave of strikes. It has also examined the factors responsible for the strike.

Students at the University of Yaounde have been quite active since the start of the political liberalisation process in the early 1990s. They then began organising into unions to fight for an improvement in their living and working conditions and for the promotion of a democratic culture in the university or society as a whole. This led them into a series of violent confrontations with the forces of law and order and the newly created militia that were closely allied to the regime in power (Konings 2002).

When these strike actions failed to deliver the students' most essential demands, some student leaders decided to change tactics and embarked upon hunger strikes. Although the government and the university authorities continued to ignore student demands, growing sympathy could be observed for the hunger strikers among the student community. As a consequence, almost the whole student population went on strike while, like the hunger strikers, trying to avoid violence. All the attempts by the government to quell the strike failed.

When the government finally realised that the strike could only be ended by peaceful negotiation, it had already moved beyond the confines of the University of Yaounde. The next chapter will turn to the University of Buea, where students joined their striking colleagues in Yaounde on what they termed a 'solidarity strike'.

Protest on the Second Front: The University of Buea Joins the Fray

Introduction

Given the systemic nature of problems within higher education in Cameroon, students at the University of Buea (UB) opted to join their Yaoundé colleagues on strike. They also articulated a long list of demands which included the scrapping of University registration fees, the provision of toilet facilities; the repeal of the faculty association fees and the better provision of student services at the university. As the strike was prolonged, these demands proved expanded to include the administration of every course during re-sit examinations, the unconditional release of arrested students, the dismissal of the Vice Chancellor and the reinstatement of the hitherto banned University of Buea Students' Union (UBSU). However, behind these demands, there were many historical subplots pitting specific individuals within the university administration against the student body.

Given a history of previous strikes, the only English-speaking University in Cameroon had forced through a decentralisation of student unionism by banning an umbrella students' union in favour of faculty associations. The idea ostensibly was to allow for better representation across faculties in the management of students' activities, given the uneven numerical distribution of student populations across faculties. This move eliminated a central organising node for student dialogue with university management and administration, replacing it with politically weaker faculty associations.

Unlike the University of Yaounde, the strike at the UB rapidly took on a violent character. The existing body of student representation from the various UB faculties lacked legitimacy and confidence among the student community and played no role in the strike. While informal leaders had sparked off the strike, they lacked any effective control over the strikers and lacked the power and authority to negotiate with the authorities. It was only after severe confrontations with the forces of law and order that the informal strike leaders revived the University of Buea Students' Union (UBSU) which had been banned after the 1995 student strike at the UB. Although not

recognised by the university authorities for some time, this body eventually proved capable of negotiating a settlement of the strike.

University of Buea and Strikes

In the twelve years of UB's existence, the university had witnessed at least five university strikes before 2005, with students graduating from the university while its administrative nucleus remained stagnant. Therefore, the individuals upon whom the responsibility fell to deal with the students' unrest which had spilled over from Yaounde were not new to the process of university crisis management. However, according to press reports assembled here, they approached the students with condescension laced with violence on and off campus to scare the students into submission. Given the absence of the Vice Chancellor, Dorothy Njeuma, at the university at the time of the strike, the responsibility fell upon the Registrar, Hebert Endeley, to manage the students' unrest. He was complemented in this role on the side of the governmental administration, by Thomas Ejake Mbonda, Governor of the South West Region.

Important in this collection of narratives, is the running commentary which captures the diversity of opinion and judgment expressed by concerned individuals, some of whom have an intimate knowledge of the crises at the University of Buea. In most of these comments lies the perception that the university crises in Cameroon present a prism through which change can be effected on the country as a whole. So the crises are not only viewed as a refraction of broader societal cleavages, but as the potential trigger for broader social transformation.

UB Strike: To the Rescue

By Azore Opio



The clouds were low in the sky but pockets of heat were trapped in the atmosphere. The heat hung ominously above the striking students. Most of them were sweating profusely. With his arms in the air, the Registrar of the University of Buea, Herbert Endeley, unsuccessfully tried to bring calm upon the disgruntled students: “I know that you have a right to complain,” Endeley told the students who waved green branches, rusty iron rods and other dangerous looking objects, and placards shouting: “Go back! Go Back! Go Back! We don’t want you!”

“I too, have my own problems,” he said. “You don’t have any problems! Komot!” “Go and jot down your grievances and come back and we talk,” the Registrar insisted. “One cannot become a God today and solve all your problems.”

“You can become one now!” the students shouted back at the Registrar who took a swig of water from a Tangui bottle. A shower of stone missiles rained on the Registrar and the publisher/reporter of *The Heron* stopped one of them on his arm. The placards the students wielded carried a variety of grievances including: “Njeuma must go!” “Ngoh must go!” “VC must be

elected!” “We want toilets!” “Flour and stew in the restau!” “Better quality food!” “Food is too expensive!” “No Fees!” “We want all subjects to be on re-sit” “We want allowances!” amongst others. Verbally, they complained of excess fees that they have to pay, for instance when they have to go on excursions; they are compelled to hire buses using their own money.

The Post’s photographer had been snapping the action scenes. But the sweet eye of the camera turned sour when irate students, frightened by the prospect of being victimised by the university administration or government agents, realised that The Post photographer had snapped them in action, barracking the Registrar, Herbert Endeley. At first, calmly, Oroch Eta trod the grass growing over the rocks that surround the Open Air AMPHI, then increased his steps. Agitating students ran after him and surrounded him and cried for blood. It was only after a long bargain that the students released the camera to The Post’s Azore Opio.

Oroch was beaten and pulled around by the striking students. One of them, a lady, hit him on his back with a stick. “I am fighting for you people,” Oroch pleaded in desperation. The students accused him of being a spy to the University administration. But the students said they would kill him. They also insisted on destroying film of the camera. In the process, Oroch lost his mobile phone, National ID and keys. The students insisted on seeing his press card, which Oroch unfortunately did not have on him. In that heat and confusion, Oroch discovered a press card in his chest pocket and thought it was his. He pulled it out and presented it to the crowd; it aggravated the situation for the card belonged to his female colleague (Effa). He was only released after his colleagues intervened with their press cards.

Earlier in that morning, The Post’s Desk Editor Pegue Manga was almost lynched when he excitedly took photographs of the demonstrators marching out of campus. He was rescued by some friends in the group who identified him with The Post.

It was probably Oroch that took the strike to the main gates of the University. For, shortly afterwards, Mrs. Ntunde, Head of Department of Law, drove in her white Mercedes Benz V Boot towards the gates. To her dismay the gate was locked and blocked by human bodies. The students booed her. Unwillingly, she reversed away from the snarling crowd. A number of lecturers had by now abandoned their lessons and slipped out of campus through the several mapangs (short cuts) to cool down their nerves in off-licences at a time when the anti-riot police were just beginning to battle

with the students who had taken over the Buea 'boulevard' stretch up to the police post in Molyko, looting beers and food in restaurants along the street.

At the same time, a group of students had remained behind at the University car pool, directly in front of the main administration building, overturning the vehicles parked there, deflating their tyres and shattering their glasses. Some of them broke the door to the administration building and entered the offices. They didn't cause much havoc, but they intimidated some of the administrators that had bravely remained on campus.

The University authorities' SOS to the Buea police yielded little help. They had to contact the Delegate General of National Security, Alain Edgar Mebe Ngo'o. Afterwards, the Prime Minister's office instructed the Southwest Governor, Thomas Ejake Mbonde, to invoke the law and use his discretion to bring the matter to an end.

April 26th, 2005- University of Buea Takes the Cue Registrar on UB Strike Action

Interviewed By Walter Wilson Nana



The Registrar of the University of Buea, UB, Herbert Endeley has said that the strike action by students that sparked off in Buea, Wednesday, is but a reaction to the one that has been going on at Yaoundé (1) for about a week

now. Endeley, who spoke to The Post, in spite of being in a crowd of angry students, thought that UB students were merely striking in solidarity with their colleagues without any tangible reason. Excerpts:

The Post: What is the root of the problem?

Dr. Endeley: I doubt if there is a root of a problem. I think that these students are just reacting to the strikes that are going on in Yaoundé. They are in solidarity with their friends without having a real reason for going on strike.

The Post: With the current situation, what next with the University of Buea?

Dr. Endeley: The students have a right not to go to school. If they do not want to go to school, let them quit the campus. What we will do is try to protect government property and public funds. They have no right to destroy them. We will protect government property. Students have a right not to go to school. If they do not want to go to school they should go home. And parents should take their responsibilities and call their children home, if they do not want to go to school. They are exposing themselves when they make marches on the streets, to all dangers that might entail. And God bless, I hope we do not get a catastrophe out of it.

The Post: Some of the grievances as expressed by the students include: having all their courses at the resit examination, public address systems should be made available in large lecture halls, fees paid at the University is exorbitant. What is your reaction to that?

Dr. Endeley: I will like to see that! That's my reaction. I will like to see what they are saying.

The Post: You saw the inscriptions on the placards?

Dr. Endeley: I do not know why a student should be sitting down and planning to fail exams.

The Post: The students also say that there is an increase in fees paid at the University of Buea?

Dr. Endeley: There is no increase in fees. I do not know of anything like that. I am the Registrar of the University of Buea. I do not know that there have been any instructions about increase of fees.

The Post: With the current situation, what are you telling the students?

Dr. Endeley: If they have problems, they should put them down in writing and we discuss them. That is the way they have been brought up.

They have been brought up to complain about what they do not like. And within the limits of the university, we will do what we have to do. All of us have been students before.

The Post: Dialogue is said to be the number one instrument of this government. But the students say that there is none between them and the administration through the student union body, which they do not have?

Dr. Endeley: That is not true. There is a Student Union body. It depends on what they define as Student Union body. There are faculty associations. When we are thinking of decentralizing the Cameroon government and say we should have Provincial governments. And in the university, we have faculty associations, it is not more effective than the general association, then we must be thinking upside down.

The Post: They want something specific, that they could channel their grievances through?

Dr. Endeley: Why a single body? Why should they channel their grievances through a single body? Do you mean 10 people can run the lives of 8600 people? Do you think so?

The Post: The students hold that the faculty associations are stooges of the university administration?

Dr. Endeley: The students themselves elect the faculty student associations. The faculty student associations collect their funds on their own, without the help of the university. The university does not manage or touch the funds of any faculty association.

The Post: Which means that the university is not linked to any of the unions?

Dr. Endeley: Of course! In principle, all faculty associations depend on their Deans, not on the central administration; we have advised them to have a college of Presidents of all the faculty associations, so that they can think together of problems that are common to all students. Every faculty has its own peculiarity. An arts student might have a problem but a science student does not have and vice-versa. And we think that, that is the best way of reaching the students. That they should be able to complain about their own problems, which are particular to them. And of course they do have general problems and they can sit together as a group and treat general problems.

The Post: What about the problems of inadequate lecture halls, toilets in the campus and water points. How soon will these problems be resolved?

Dr. Endeley: The University of Buea was built for a certain number of people when they started it. In the beginning, there were 60 students in the campus. In one night, it changed to 700. In the last 10 years, it is now 8600. In the period of these 13 years that the university has existed, the government has not spent money on investment in a fashion that is proportionate to the increase of students on this campus. I do not know whether you think that the Vice-Chancellor or her assistants or the Registrar should contribute their salaries to build toilets.

The Post: So, will the toilets not be built?

Dr. Endeley: I am not saying that the University is not going to build toilets. We will do what we can do within the means that are available to us. This is 2005, up till now that we are talking, which is April ending, we have not got the investment budgets of last year. Yet we are building classrooms. Money we were supposed to do something else, we are building classrooms with.

The Post: What about the issue of no re-sits courses for level 400 students?

Dr. Endeley: That is not true. The only level of courses that we allow student to sit, even when they are less than what we call an economic number, it is 400 level courses. Even if it is one student, we allow him/her to sit. One of the things we must remember is that teachers go on holidays too. And we cannot force a teacher to leave his/her holiday and come and run an exam. He/she is not going to be paid for it. The teachers are not paid for running re-sits. He/she is not paid for correcting re-sits. The teachers must do it and on his/her free will. We cannot force a teacher to run a re-sit, because we are not going to pay him for it.

The Post: The fees the students pay cannot run the university?

Dr. Endeley: I beg your pardon; the students do not pay fees. The tuition fees for a faculty of Arts student, the Minister said it in the last few weeks, if he/she was going to pay fees will be roughly FCFA 600.000, tuition fees. The FCFA 50.000 the students pay is called a registration fee. That is what qualifies you to be a student. And it is only 50.000. Let us not think that it is a lot. If any of you knows the school fees of a student in the USA, to do a first degree is not less than FCFA 20.000.000, for a foreign student. In the Catholic University in Cameroon, the tuition fees are not less than FCFA 750.000. Yet they do not accept all the students who apply. That is, there are

Cameroonians who are ready to pay FCFA 750.000 to go to the Catholic University.

The Post: With the government investment funds not forthcoming, where do you get money to run the university?

Dr. Endeley: That is probably your responsibility as a journalist to tell the public that the universities are not getting their investment funds. And that education is a priority and the government should facilitate that for the universities. Even the students say they do not have enough classes and they go to class at night, what do we do? Do we invent classrooms? Classrooms are built. And we build them with money. And unfortunately, the students do not pay. They pay FCFA 50.000. If the students were paying more, then we will use the money to invest. I also paid fees. I did not go to a free school. I paid school fees. I paid more fees than you will pay for the rest of your lives if you are going to stay in a Cameroonian university. I went to school. I was a student union leader. I led riots like you are leading right now. So, I know what riots are. Marching on the streets is not a riot. That is causing public nuisance. And if somebody gets killed out there, God bless him.

The Post: The students also complain of poor quality food in the university restaurant at FCFA 400. They say that the amount should be reduced.

Dr. Endeley: Reduce what? I have told you we have a treasury problem. This school is funded 99% by government. In 2004, we received only 47% of our budget. And the students were here for a whole year. So, we have paid for their food even when we do not have money. For the love of this microphone, it is not compulsory for the students to go and eat in the restaurant. They can eat somewhere else. They live out of campus anyway!! The restaurant is not obligatory. We do not force students to eat in the restaurant. If the food is not good and they complain about it, we will take the necessary measures to make sure that is done. But they can only eat food for the money they pay for.

The Post: What about subsidies?

Dr. Endeley: The subsidy is a decision of the university. It is not even a state policy. Since most of the students are lodged off campus, and it is sometimes difficult to go back home, and if they have classes in the afternoon, that they should be able to eat on campus. So, we should help them by subsidising the meals. And we do that. The meals cost us FCFA 450 and the students pay FCFA 150. So, it means the university pays the rest.

The Post: There is also the persistent complain of inertia and bureaucracy in the University of Buea?

Dr. Endeley: One of the first documents we give to students when they arrive on this campus is the students' handbook. If you read your students' handbook, it tells you exactly how to make your revendications about examination marks or your continuous assessment marks. Some students even refuse to go and read their marks. If you come two years later and complain that your Continuous Assessment marks were wrong, what do you want us to really do about it, when you know that before you do your exams you should have corrected your CA marks? For us to modify a student's marks or results, it is a long and tedious process.

The Post: From your own assessment of the current situation in the University of Buea, are you convinced the students have genuine grievances?

Dr. Endeley: Every student like every human being has grievances. I have mine too. I think my salary is too low. One of the things all of us pray for is that we should have a University campus. That we should be able to lodge about 60-70% of our students on campus. Then we can give them a University culture. We cannot run a University system where 80-90% of the students are living in the streets. It does not work. That is why we are having the kind of reaction we are having right now. Because our students are living with vandals, they are beginning to behave like vandals. If it were a normal university campus, they will have a strike but they would not go to the streets, because their homes will belong in the campus.

Comments

This goes to confirm what I have written elsewhere on this forum. UB students should count their blessings rather than follow Yaounde blindly like sheep. I have been at UB and I can tell you I see the likes of Titanji, Endeley and Njeuma struggling every day with limited resources to make the best for students. Only in UB do procedures exist for students to challenge marks, evaluate their teachers, etc. Every activity in UB is planned one year ahead of time, timetables, exams, admissions, etc. There is no bribery involved in admissions and award of degrees. In short UB is a paradise in Cameroon. Of course with more money things could be better. But the truth is the money is simply not there. Do you want the VC and DVCs to use their meagre salaries to build facilities? The gendarmes were very wrong to harass innocent

students in their homes. But that is Cameroon, the forces of law and order have become forces of lawlessness and disorder. Why should a university student put himself at the hands of an illiterate first school certificated gendarme? I hope this problem is peacefully resolved.

Posted by: [JP Tanyong](#) | April 28, 2005 10:03 AM

On a personal note, I think there is a lot of inconsistency with the registrar's answers. First he claims that the students do not have a legitimate reason to strike and somewhere along the line he acknowledges the fact that there are grievances. Who is he trying to protect? Himself, the Cameroon government or the school? By the way, if he spent all the money anyone can ever pay as school fees on his education, what the hell is he doing in Buea on a meagre salary? Doing charity work or corporal works of mercy, so to speak. Let me make a guess, lobbying for an appointment with the autocratic government of Cameroon someday. Let me conclude by giving the registrar some credit for being so honest about the Buea University crisis and the detrimental situation of students and lecturers. What a sad situation?

Posted by: [Max](#) | April 28, 2005 10:09 AM

Mr. Registrar, thank you for your reaction to the situation in your University. Though traditionally, one should not start from the end, but because you made a good remark at the end, from there I will start. To the question: "There is also the persistent complain of inertia and bureaucracy in the University of Buea", your answer in denial of the existence of bureaucracy included the frank statement: "For us to modify a student's marks or results, it is a long and tedious process". I think deep in you, you realise what I mean, without it being said, if bureaucracy can be properly defined. You equally made mention of the fact that a proper channel to resolve such problems is through the students unions, claimed not to be "managed" by the administration. Being stooges of the University is not only about management of their funds, but performing their duties. The administration is all about a casino arena, and the University has all the aces. Coming to the aspect of viewing their strike as a blind-emulation from the University of Yaoundé I, this is not the best spectacle to be had on by a Registrar in a winter university environment. The grievances of the striking

university students are for the benefit of the national student body, which include the student body of the University of Buea.

Posted by: [Ngange Nfor Ngala](#) | April 28, 2005 10:16 AM

I have been a student and I think the registrar is wrong in saying that there are no complaints or grievances. The food is very unappetizing, no drinking water on campus, etc. These are very basic things students need. The registrar is wrong because I think he is rather supposed to protect the students. He is protecting the government and pretending that student have no grievances. He is even pro-government to the point where, he already sees the government using its brutal police force to subdue students who are fighting for their basic human and student rights. For how long will our fellow Anglophones conspire with Francophones against us? Mr Registrar I think it is time for you to repent.

Posted by: [Ted](#) | April 28, 2005 10:38 AM

I just went through the interview. It gives a retrospect of what is obtained here. For some of the casualties, we can cite the following – the Registrar's car was destroyed though not burnt; computers were stolen from school; photocopiers are missing; rims of paper cannot be found. Staff Canteen was destroyed and drinks were gulped. Resto also had its share. Tyre of the cars in front of the central administration had their own fate to suffer. Police went to hostels, beat students, threw water on their beds, took money and phones. Students can't live in their residences as the Police keep on promising to come back. While some are going back to Bamenda, Yaounde, Kumba, etc., those with relatives around Buea are taking refuge there. To the best of my knowledge, two students as of moment are dead. One undergraduate, one Masters. Both were shot this afternoon.

In my opinion, the Police have gone too far. When rioting started this afternoon, people were running. One lady (owner of a storey building house) directly opposite Mr. Fokobo's residence, for those who can figure it out. The ground floor used to host a cyber cafe called Maxi Info tech. Today it's hosting a pharmacy on one hand and a cooperative bank on the other. The mum was plaiting her hair in front of her building when Policemen fell on her. She was putting on a white t-shirt. I was standing by the Police station

when she came. Her white was transformed to red in the manner Jesus changed during the transfiguration. She tried to explain and the policemen were still shouting at her. Because she had lost so much blood, she collapsed. I was an eyewitness. She was then rushed to the hospital. It is indeed terrible.

Sango is talking of University education being a privilege and must be paid for, what of universities in other countries, which tuition is free even to foreigners. Is he supposing that those countries don't value education or that it hasn't got intellectuals? My five words, Father thy will be done.

Posted by: [UB Lover](#) | April 28, 2005 07:55 PM

Originally posted on UB Alumni internet group

Yes my dear brothers and sisters of the great triangle. It is only in time of trouble that you know your true friends. We seem to be mixing up things in this strike issue. Unless Cameroonians, young and old are ready to face the truth then the fight for a change is nonsense. Whatever the reason may be for students to go on strike gives no reason why students should be shot dead or even shot. We all know that the francophone universities are given priority as far as infrastructures and human resources are concerned in Cameroon. If Yaoundé University I should complain of poor infrastructure then UB should be a nightmare.

Herbert Endeley should keep politics aside and talk like somebody who knows the house pretty well than anybody in that institution. We all know that since 1993 when six state Universities were created it is only UB that still has her pioneer vice rector in the same capacity in the same institution. Hebert Endeley was one of the very first people to complain that Dorothy Njeuma expected him to book audience to see her despite the fact that he was her closest collaborator. From The Post, there are all indications that the students meant no violence; they needed to talk with Njeuma and not a representative like Endeley whose own hands were and are still tied. There are all indications that this student were pushed too far to the wall by using force from poorly trained, uneducated, and recalcitrant thieves in Uniform (so-called police). I remember when Etame Massoma was governor; the students took to the streets when a certain Parents' Faculty Association (PFA) was created. He was able to maturely and peacefully send the students back to class. Herbert Endeley knows what the problem is but cannot handle it and that is why he was not given the chance by the angry students to

intervene. How many student union leaders have been tortured, suspended and or dismissed for opposing the UB administration? How many lecturers have left UB because they lack good working conditions? I remember our days in Dschang when a Rector came to a lecture hall and was ignored. He immediately realised it was unusual and immediately sought to know what was wrong. The hall lacked a microphone and the following week, one was provided for that hall. It sounds ridiculous for a learned Cameroonian to compare the standard of education in America with that of Cameroon. How many students in Cameroon work while going to school? How much does the government give annually as financial aid to qualified students in Cameroon? How many Cameroonians live above a dollar (500frs) daily? There are very few students who study in America from their pockets. They either have grants, loans or scholarships. Njeuma has done more than enough damage to UB and we think it is time for her to leave the public service and concentrate in the politburo of the CPDM.

Posted by: [Eastwood](#) | April 30, 2005 04:23 PM

Dr. Herbert Endeley Should Think Again

Sidney Nkellefack Tazeh

If Dr. Herbert Endeley, Registrar of the University of Buea, could say the strike by students of the University was simply a show of solidarity with their colleagues in Yaounde, and that they had no reason, then he had better think again. He talks about students planning to fail. Is there any human being on earth who likes to fail? Even if students decide to fail, should that be Dr. Endeley's headache?

Why is it that all other state-owned universities offer all courses at the re-sit, but UB has refused to do the same? Do they think they are the one-eyed man in the country of the blind? If the University cannot pay lecturers for conducting and marking re-sit exams, is it the students' fault? What about lecturers in other state universities who put aside every other thing just to organise re-sits? Or are UB lecturers the busiest in the country? What about numerous cases where students are forced to re-sit courses because their CA marks were omitted in the final results.

Students leave Yaounde, Bamenda, Douala, etc., to Buea for courses, which are duly announced for re-sits. They stay in Buea for about two weeks preparing for the re-sit only to be told a day to the exam that the re-sit for a certain course has been cancelled because the lecturer has not made his/herself available, or because of low registration. I do not think there has ever been a case where a single student sat in for a course during the re-sit as Dr. Endeley claims.

The Registrar also poorly addressed the idea of a student union. The existence of faculty associations does not mean the absence of a student union. The idea of a student union was not conceived in Buea (nor in Cameroon). University institutions worldwide have student unions (just like workers in different working institutions/corporations have a workers' unions), which have proved to be very effective in addressing students'/workers' problems. So, Endeley should not think he is making a legitimate claim by denying the effectiveness of a student union.

He talks of an Arts student probably having a different problem from a Science student. So what if they both have a common problem? Which of these two students' associations would handle such a problem? If Endeley can call the sum of FCFA 50.000 students pay as 'small/only', then he must think again.

Given a pretty large sum of money (twice the pay of some workers), how on earth should an intellectual like him compare the fees in Cameroon, a poor Third World country, with that in the US? Has he also forgotten that there are countries in Europe, which provide free education in state-owned universities?

If the Cameroon government cannot provide free education, something it once did for its citizens, then what can it boast of? Is this what they call *Grandes Ambitions*? – students cannot even find jobs after graduation.

If Endeley is saying that because he paid fees during his own time, we are obliged to pay now, times change and should always change for the better. It is a pity that an intellectual like Dr. Endeley should talk with such mediocrity. Do not compare UB, a state-owned university and the Catholic University (not owned by the state).

Dr. Endeley, can you give a child a snake when he asks for bread because he is not forced to eat at home? Should students be fed with what even lecturers themselves cannot eat? The food prepared at the student restaurant is an insult. It is better the University closes down the restaurant.

The Registrar can't deny the fact that the bureaucracy in UB is too stiff and too long. You need to see how students sweat and take months to have errors on their transcripts corrected, though they are usually not responsible for the errors.

Imagine a final year student who had a B grade in FRE 102 and found an F on his transcript. When he went to the Faculty of Arts (headed by Dr. Victor Julius Ngoh) he was told that the lecturer concerned was too busy to retrieve the result sheet for that course. The said student was 'advised' to 'just manage' and come for an extra year to re-do FRE 102.

There are students who have followed up transcript corrections for more than a year and have finally given up. I think it's high time such incompetent members of the administration are shown the door.

May 06, 2005 at 01:38 PM in [Guest Contributors](#) | [Permalink](#)

Friday April 29, 2005

**UB Joins Varsity Strike: Students Sack Campus, Destroy Cars
Several Students, Police Hospitalised, Registrar's Pleas Ignored, Cops
Resort on Hostel to Hostel Search, Rampant Arrests Recorded**

By Pegue Manga & Effa Tambenkongho



The strike action initiated by students of the University of Yaoundé I on Wednesday, April 20, spiralled into the University of Buea, UB, as some 5000

students joined in, on Wednesday, April 27. But unlike the strike in Yaoundé, that of UB assumed a violent proportion, with students clashing with the police, destroying vehicles and other property belonging to the University and other private individuals. The students went amok after an abortive attempt by the Registrar, Herbert Nganjo Endeley, to placate them. They marched to the main road, blocking traffic and mounting barricades, using call boxes and newspaper stands.

Things turned ugly when the police, who had been watching the students, tried to disperse them. Teargas canisters were fired in the air. The students replied with stones. When the canisters of tear gas were finished, the police also picked up stones and started throwing at the students. The police had to beat a hasty retreat, taking casualties. However, they succeeded in arresting some students whom they locked up at the Molyko Police Post. The students marched to the police post, asking for their immediate release. Some of them were released but others were surreptitiously transferred to the Mobile Wing Police Station.

Overwhelmed by the students, the administration sought reinforcement from Douala. A water canon was brought in, including a clutch of policemen. They succeeded in breaking up the demonstration. But before that, the students had gone on the rampage on campus. The staff canteen now lies in ruins. The students attacked the University restaurant, gulped down drinks in the deep freezers and destroyed pots of rice.

They hit the Central Administration building too, deflating the tires and overturning some vehicles parked in front of the building. They shattered louvers in the building and tore down all notices on the wall.

The Faculty of Arts was in a mess as all results published on the notice board were pulled down. Even garbage containers were turned upside down. The students also looted computers and printers, the university authorities said.

The police bludgeoned the students hard. They literally broke into student residences located on University Street and fished out some students who were flogged and dumped into a police van. But in spite of the reinforcement, the students kept throwing stones from the nearby bushes.

Crisis Meeting

After the police had retaken the University campus, Southwest Governor, Thomas Ejake Mbonda, including the SDO and DO of Buea, went round to assess the level of destruction inflicted on the institution's property.

In a crisis meeting held at the Central Administration, Prof. Emmanuel Nges Chia, said they were told a delegation of five arrived from Yaoundé on Wednesday morning and instigated the students to go on strike. "They came without warning," he said. Prof. Chia said he was surprised the students went on the rampage. "In Yaoundé, the students did not destroy a pin," he said.

Governor Ejake said they were confused, because the students did not notify the administration before going on strike. He said the destruction on campus took place because the police thought the strike was limited to the University junction and around the police post in Malingo Junction. "So we were very surprised to learn that they were destroying on campus," Ejake said. He also noted that some policemen had been wounded and five of their vehicles have been damaged. "Some policemen have been hospitalised, after sustaining injuries. "Ejake said policemen would be stationed on the University campus until such a time when peace would have been re-established. He promised, "What has happened today would not happen again."

It was decided that henceforth, the University of Buea remains out of bounds from 6:00 pm to 6:00 am, except for students residing on campus. Fako SDO, Bernard Okalia Bilai, said it was inadmissible that a delegation would leave Yaounde to foment a strike action in Buea, without information filtering out. Okalia said the group of students, who were moving from class to class stopping students from attending lectures, should be identified and arrested.

What the Students Want

One of the leaders of the demonstration, who asked not to be named, said they have decided to join their brothers in sister universities, in the strike action. He said they pay FCFA 68,000 in the university, but that not up to half of this amount is used. "UB is the most expensive state owned university in Cameroon. We want the FCFA 50,000 we pay as fees, scrapped," he

yelled. He also said that UB is too bureaucratic. “They can’t look into the students’ problems, because they have not created the propitious atmosphere for dialogue. Before you sign a document you take more than a month.”

The leader said students are made to spend several years in the University, because they cannot validate sports. “The sports we do every morning trekking to school are enough. Sport has no credit. It does not affect us, yet it keeps reducing our GPA,” he growled. He warned that if the authorities do not meet their demands they will intensify the strike action.

The leaders of the demonstration summoned all the students to the open Amphitheatre, where they explained to their mates the aim of the strike. They said it is a peaceful demonstration. They said they have suffered for too long, and now want changes. They read out a list of what the students want, including the amelioration of study conditions. They want all courses offered during the re-sit, good toilets, more lecture halls, microphones in Amphitheatres; that AMPHI 750 should be changed to 650 because it lacks 100 seats. They also want to be offered good food at the University restaurant among others.

Some of the students blamed their woes on Victor Julius Ngoh, Dean of the Faculty of Arts. They said Ngoh has more powers than any Vice Rector in the world. “Ngoh is Njeuma’s alter ego. He holds eight posts in the university and he would not have had the powers if Njeuma did not give him,” they said. The students said, through Ngoh, dialogue has been stifled in the University of Buea. “That is why the destruction has been very massive because the anger in us is pent up.”

The Strike

While they were still talking, the Registrar left his office, to join the students at the open AMPHI but the students screamed at him, insisting that they do not need any dialogue with him. Meanwhile, a group of students mobilised and went from one lecture hall to the other, ordering their mates to abandon lectures; they sent away lecturers and mobilised. Gradually, the group increased in number and by 9:00 am there was a crowd of students on campus carrying leaves chanting, “UB must change”.

The students marched to the UB restaurant, where a lecture was going on in the open hall. They chased out the lecturer, overturned the benches saying

it was not fit to be a lecture hall. They sacked the University restaurant, leaving behind a real mess.

The students carried placards on which they had written “We want all courses in the re-sit”, “better means of publishing SMS results”, “No payment of Fees”, “Njeuma UB is not your house” “50.000 before we go for games”, among others.

The students took to the University Junction and disrupted traffic and there they met the police. They Shouted, “No Police” “no dialogue” “we are tired of promises”. The police tried to pamper the students so they could reach a compromise, but it was to no avail.

They marched back into the campus, went to the central administration and, in the presence of the Registrar, Herbert Endeley, who had been trying to dialogue with them, Dr. Victor Ngoh, Dean of Faculty of Arts, and Dr. John Ebanja, one of the Deputy Vice Deans, the students screamed, “Njeuma must go”. Some of the students went hitting the windows of the building with the leaves they were carrying, while others tried to flatten the tires of a tractor that was packed in front of the Central Administration.

Invasion of Hostels

Police invaded hostels like Kiki, Mengweh, Monte Carlos in the University neighbourhood. They beat up students, seized their mobile phones and looted property. The police poured water on the flour and asked the students to sit on it. A student told The Post the police broke into her room and took away money. Many students sustained arm, elbow and knee injuries. By press time five of the students were hospitalised. One of them is said to be in a coma.

The University authorities announced that classes would resume on Thursday, April 28.

Clashes, Arrests Persist At UB

By Pegue Manga

The strike action that started in the University of Buea, Wednesday, April 27, is continuing today, Thursday, with students clashing with riot-police.

The students regrouped this morning and attempted to march to the Governor's office, but they were blocked by the combat ready police.



Police Raiding Student Residential Neighbourhood

They decided to sit on the tarmac but the police started pouring teargas on them. The students went wild and mounted barricades on the road. The result was a fierce confrontation. Some students suffered serious injury. The Post also saw a policeman being rushed to the hospital with blood oozing from a wound on his head.

Southwest Governor, Thomas Ejake Mbonda, who arrived on the scene was blocked by the students. He tried to force his way back in his office, with the help of the police to no avail. The students were inflating their anger?? Reinforcement was called. The police used water cannon and teargas to break the barricade. The students replied by destroying newly erected lamp posts on the ridge of the boulevard. The confrontation might persist as students are said to be regrouping in the neighbourhood.

Comments

It is a sad situation. I do hope it will have a peaceful end. I am worried about the picture on this site of police raiding the student neighbourhood. I will like to know if we have a new police uniform in Cameroon, because what I am seeing resembles a scene of a Nigerian film.

Posted by: [sino](#) | May 1, 2005 07:23 AM

It is hard to believe that our cops are facing students. Would they be this bold if these were bandits? It's a shame on some of these uniform guys. Well, student strikes have most often been at the front of many meaningful changes around the world. Go on guys!

Posted by: [Monik Awasum](#) | May 1, 2005 08:48 AM

Can The Post clarify the debate about this picture once and for all. Is this an image from another source or an actual picture of events in Buea? See concerns below expressed on the UB alumni forum. In fact the pictures of "police raiding student hostels" on that post online looks more of a caption from a Nigerian Movie. Things like these should stop!

Val Barrister, Solicitor & Notary Public, Amity Law Offices, BUEA

Posted by: [From UB Forum](#) | May 1, 2005 01:58 PM

After having read all the comments and seen the pictures posted on this link, I would like to call on all Cameroonians to stand up for a peaceful nationwide strike. Let us look at what happened early this year in Lebanon where Rafik Hariri the former prime minister and head of government was assassinated. More than half of the nation stood up and asked for the existing government to be dissolved and it happened. Why can Cameroonians not do the same? Civil servants and students staying at home as long as possible will crumble the existing government. Students are standing up for their rights and drunkards in uniforms whose souls and bodies have been taken hostage by the post-colonial skivvies of the imaginary god of African countries cannot take the opportunity to follow their Children and Brothers to break us loose from this great depression but have the courage to break into rooms of innocent and armless students. These pictures show us the only thing Pierre Minlo's regime left for these guys. Can they really stand the noise of a real gun shot in the action I see if the opposite reaction was equal? This is a shame for those of us living abroad. Our fathers in the opposition camp have failed us. Let us use the Lebanese option and save our souls.

Posted by: [King Li](#) | May 2, 2005 09:11 AM

Please students, don't put your precious lives at risk. Desist from this violence and return to your homes. That is my humble appeal. These useless beer-drinking and gun-loving policemen have nothing to lose. Most of them are already very frustrated with their lives and want to cut short those of rising stars like yourselves.

Posted by: [JP Tanyong](#) | April 28, 2005 11:13 AM

UB Strike: Curtain Raiser

By Azore Opio

The Buea University strike last week presented a great cast of characters – students, a sprinkling of university administrators, a handful of anti-riot police and red-bereted gendarmes, the Southwest Governor, the SDO, the Southwest Provincial Delegate of National Security, on-lookers who were eager to see some swift action and a clandestine gang of stragglers who would later join in the fray and add speed and heat to the strike.

Until about 11.00 am on Wednesday, April 27, the lid of the pressure cooker of the crime, terror and the black madness that would overtake Molyko was still screwed on. Then a couple of anxious cops grabbed some students, whipped them. A terrible darkness fell upon Molyko the moment the agents of law and order advanced upon students. Fleeing and hiding, the two parties, cheered on by the locals, played hide and seek till the late hours of the afternoon.

The following day, students throwing stones at armed anti-riot troops imported from Douala filled the day with action. Stone barriers blocked the main roads, while a battered water canon lorry patrolled, scattering the students.

The University grounds were declared out of bounds. A few students who felt book-bound received truncheon blows from angry policemen. Before darkness fell upon the neighbourhood of Molyko, reports had reached The Post news desk that two students had fallen to police bullets.

They were dead as stone. But earlier in the afternoon, the police had removed their humane masks and replaced them with warriors' masks.

Embers of Disaffection

They had been glowing in the hearth – Faculty association fees of some FCFA 2000 per student head, yet the provision for this doesn't seem to be in the text governing UB, lack of proper food and toilets for the over 8.000 students. The students complained that, “UB is the most expensive state-owned university in Cameroon.” They said they wanted the FCFA 50,000 registration fees scrapped. They said also that too much bureaucracy hindered the smooth running of students' affairs, and a host of other complaints.

In fact, it will be recalled that in the absence of the Vice Chancellor, VC, Dr. Dorothy Njeuma, nobody else could make any reasonable decision. However, speculations that the SDF party and the SCNC might have had their hands in the strike collapsed as Fru Ndi, SDF Chairman, was deep in an emotional disaster mourning his late wife, and couldn't have had the time nor the will to indulge in such an event. Meanwhile, the SCNC is crawling low for the moment. The void that exists between the University administration and the student body appeared to have contributed quite a lot in the breakdown of dialogue before and during the strike.

Some of the students also added spice to the strike by teaming up with a few Molyko-based consumers of marijuana.

Some Like It Hot

The police had a field day or two. It seems they were eager to beat and loot, for fierce-looking combat ready troops suddenly switched from chasing students to searching houses and mini-cities. Doors went flying under the impact of heavy boots. Anybody who was in sight regardless of whether they were students or not, was flogged to the fullest, their watches, cellualars, money and almost their sex, were wrenched from them. Toilet seats, windowpanes, cutlery and utensils, books and stationery, and beddings and clothing would later be found floating in water or lying in heaps of rubble.

Then the students were ferreted out of their rooms, beaten and trucked to police cells. Of course, the police didn't quite get away untouched. Some of them ran into fierce students that clobbered them for the price of their uniforms. Ill-clad, hungry, thirsty, smokeless, tired of running up and down

instead of collecting FCFA 500 on the roadsides, the police looked disgusted enough to beat and loot.

Down With the Elite

People have said things about the University of Buea; its staff, its students, parents and just about any ordinary man on the street. Only the University authorities never seem to take notice. The students' complaints about too much power in the hands of a single person seemed to incense them more than anything else.

They shouted quite a lot about one Dr. Victor Julius Ngoh's accumulation of offices. By all physical appearances and intent, Ngoh is harmless, but he occupies three high class and extremely demanding positions at the University of Buea. As at the time of the strike, he was the Dean of the Faculty of Arts, Vice Dean of the Faculty of Arts, Head of History Department, University of Buea, and he was also the star-studded Associate Professor of History in the same Department – formidable tasks indeed.

Added to these, he is also the chair of Intensive English at UB, designed specially for Francophone students who gain admission into the University of Buea and he, too, represents the VC on the board of the GCE Board.

Now this seems to be a rather tight cobweb the intellectual has woven about himself and, by simple arithmetic, the sum total is that whenever Ngoh interacts with some of the 'people' that hold the above posts, he is practically interacting with himself. That is to say, whenever he communicates, verbally or in writing, with, say, the Head of Department of History, or the Vice Dean of the Faculty of Arts, or the Associate Professor of History at UB, he is communicating with himself. That means he can mar and make as he wishes. This apparent arbitrary and rather oppressive character of the UB administrator's roles most likely increased the prospect of sparking off last week's violence.

To both ordinary Cameroonians and the University's intelligentsia, it symbolises the rapaciousness of the University administration of denying other qualified and experienced Cameroonians such posts as Ngoh might have.

UB is terrifically organised. While some placards said one thing about Njeuma and election of university administrative officials, many others screamed, “Ngoh Must Go! Ngoh Must Go!”

Although the students did not accuse Ngoh of committing any crimes, financial or otherwise, there was something odoriferous about his case. There seems to be a thriving cult of greed and power at the University of Buea in which some people are overtaken by accelerated individualism in their drive to join the mainstream of power.

Ngoh’s ‘chieftaincy’ at the University of Buea seems to be muddled by an imbroglio with ‘skirts.’ Unsubstantiated rumours have been rife about illicit sex – Sexually Transmitted Marks, STMs – at the Faculty of Arts. But none of these seem ever to have been investigated by the University authority.

May 04, 2005 at 03:05 AM in [Special Report: The University of Buea Crisis](#) | [Permalink](#)

Comments

It is absolutely preposterous, and why not ridiculous, for a single individual to wrap himself in a spectrum of top-ranking positions. Authority, they say, comes from above. I begin to wonder what might become of Julius Victor Ngoh’s ‘authorities’ with regards to his hold on such vital positions? I am sure he has plans of becoming the next Vice Chancellor. Greed will do nothing to a man other than choking him up with all the things he ever wants. He is really gradually building up a chieftaincy in that University. It really puzzles me when I reminisce of the kind of lecturer student relationship that exists in the university of Buea. I haven’t even talked of the red carpet reception that is given to professors when they ever decide to take upon themselves to give a lecture. I call my professors by their first name. Not even sir attached. Tell me how you will not feel free to study and clear all the doubts you ever have. There is not scholarship in the University of Buea. No research. Students leave the university without even knowing how to pipette nor use the centrifuge. No practical work is being done, let not talking of the lecturers carrying out research. Just a hand-few can manage to grab research grants and the university does nothing to see in to the situation of those left without a grant. It even puzzles me when the school will prefer to switch off electricity from the life sciences labs just to provide them to

central administration and Humanities faculties, preferring to lose about 5 months of hard intellectual property. It shocks me a lot. I have never witnessed a light out in Europe. What is wrong with UB even in the possession of 2 mega electricity capacitors. Only the almighty God knows what awaits the people stifling the progress of the university in favour of personal aggrandisement. God save the students.

Posted by: [Cheongwa Nkwete Wanzie](#) | May 5, 2005 01:18 AM

In the last few days, we can say that the tight lid over the supposedly “melting pot” of the University of Buea blew open by those who made the lid tight in the first place. We easily understand why none of the authorities or lecturers has dared a statement on the “high-handedness”, intimidation, violent physical injuries and murders acts perpetrated on the students of the University of Buea. But this is not a surprise to many of us who have been closely following the very “participatory and inclusive” governance of the “only Anglo-Saxon university in Central Africa,” that has succeeded to make itself a reputation thanks to the cult of individual wielders of deadly power in the life of this institution. Such cries as “Ngoh must go” are merely indicators of the extent to which such “powers that be” have succeeded to both symbolically and tangibly “impose” their omnipresent nature on the daily life of the University of Buea. It is equally necessary that we begin begging such “chiefs” to further align themselves with the forces of “law and(dis)order?” to continue suppressing the few attempts which their students are making to “express their fears and misery”, even to the extent of killing and maiming them. However let them remember that even if Sigmund Freud was not always correct in his physio-psychological analogies, he was correct in this: the absence or suppression of channels for the expression of burgeoning internal energies inevitably leads to the self-consumption of such energies by the body. The question I ask is: Are the University of Buea, and its authorities ready to consume the burgeoning and apparently frustrated energies of the students when the time comes? For what I know, such frustration will surely be tripled. Let them get ready to kill and maim further. The journey has surely just begun for that institution.

Posted by: [Talbot Lion](#) | May 5, 2005 07:28 AM

There's Dr Ngoh's name again! I met him on several occasions during my time in Cameroon. My opinion was that he was too busy playing sordid games with the Dean's daughter and accepting favours for marks to be a constructive member of the faculty. It is funny now seeing that opinion, being echoed by others. This strange but true story even gets a chapter in my nearly finished book. This whole business at the Buea University is a prime representation of the present government's attitude towards the Anglophone zones. This information should go far and wide, drawing attention to this intolerable situation.

Glenn Wilson, Australia

Conclusion

Chapter Three has examined the University of Buea which was the second to have picked the cue from Yaounde University. Following the stories from newspapers and commentaries from individuals one gathers that there were more and complicated causes to the University of Buea strike. No doubt of all the universities that went on strike, Buea was the most protracted and recorded dead of students as well.

Although the UB authorities had experienced several strikes in the past, they proved incapable of handling the strike. They tended to administer the university in an authoritarian way, showing hardly any respect for students' opinions and actions and creating little room for regular dialogue. Following the 1995 strike, they had banned the student union, which could have served as an important intermediary between the university administration and students. Given these circumstances, students were likely to rely on strike actions to represent and defend their interests with the administration. When students went on strike, the university authorities were often inclined to call upon the forces of law and order to intervene rather than to settle the issues through peaceful negotiations. Like elsewhere in Africa, violent confrontations between students and the forces of law and order have become a regular phenomenon in Cameroonian universities.

The next chapter examines the strike in the universities of Douala and Dschang.

Chapter 5

The Hurricane of Student Strike Action Sweeps into Douala and Dschang

Introduction

In early May 2005, the students' strike which had begun in Yaoundé and spread to Buea slowly engulfed Douala and Dschang. The students of both universities joined their colleagues from the sister universities in solidarity, but also because the issues raised from the outset at the University of Yaoundé I were being faced by those of the other public universities. Despite attempts by the University of Douala Rector, Bruno Bekolo Ebe, to stave off the spreading flames of student unrest, his students slowly joined the striking ranks under the banner of the SOS Students' Union.

The evolution of the strike at the University of Douala took a particular twist with the creation of the splinter group, SOS-Solidarité from SOS. This came following accusations of corruption of the leadership of SOS by governmental, university and political authorities in exchange for the student leaders calling off the strike. The splinter SOS-Solidarité pointed to evidence of dereliction of SOS leadership duties as documented and their falling silent in the middle of the strike. Despite this sub-plot of a splintering student union organisation in Douala, there were also cases of the incursion of the gendarmes on the university campus and the arrest and detention of students.

Le Quotidien Mutations : Société du VENDREDI, 29 AVRIL, 2005 - 07:37

Douala : Fébrilité sur le campus

Lazare Kolyang

Les cours se déroulent normalement en dépit d'une psychose grandissante

Face aux membres des bureaux des différentes associations des sept établissements de l'université de Douala, en présence des dirigeants de ces établissements et de ses proches collaborateurs, le recteur Bruno Bekolo Ebe

a semblé ne pas s'intéresser à l'actualité qui a cours au sein des universités de Yaoundé et de Buéa. Mercredi dernier, 27 avril, à l'AMPHI 200 de l'ESSEC, au cours d'une réunion dite de coordination, il a limité les débats aux problèmes internes à cette institution. "Différentes questions ont été passées en revue. Il s'agissait notamment des problèmes quotidiens que rencontrent les étudiants : absence de toilettes, mauvaise qualité de sonorisations des AMPHIs, etc.", affirme un représentant d'étudiants présent à cette rencontre.

Il poursuit que : "c'est à la fin de la réunion que le recteur a fait allusion à ce qui se passe actuellement dans les autres universités. Il a reconnu qu'il est de notre droit de faire des revendications, mais il nous a exhortés à ne pas suivre l'exemple des autres universités et que nous avons intérêt à ce que l'année académique soit validée. Sur ce, il a mis un terme à la réunion, sans qu'aucun débat ne s'ouvre sur ce dernier point".

Les réunions se succèdent, à tous les niveaux, dans l'espoir de mettre les étudiants à l'aise à chaque poste. Hier jeudi, par exemple, une note du directeur du Centre des œuvres universitaires (Dcou) interdit aux personnels enseignants et administratifs, qui avaient pris l'habitude de manger au restaurant universitaire, d'y aller. Bien avant, mardi 26 avril, des étudiants de la faculté des Sciences économiques et de gestion appliquée qui se plaignaient depuis quelques semaines du manque des piles pour l'alimentation des micros, avaient déjà manifesté au sein du campus. Une solution avait immédiatement été trouvée ce jour-là par l'envoi de dix micros et d'un carton de piles.

Pour l'heure, les cours se déroulent normalement dans les différents établissements. Mais la fébrilité se ressent. Et de bouche à oreille, la rumeur d'une éventuelle manifestation se propage à travers le campus.

Douala University Yet To Join Strike

By Mirabel Azanghe Tandafor

It is 2:00 pm at the University of Douala, April 28. Despite the chilly weather, everyone seems to be minding their business on the Makepe Campus. Some students, who probably just left a class, could be seen loitering around the students' canteen, and chatting. They were audible enough to any passer-by such that there could be no suspicion of a secret

meeting. Featuring in the conversation were names of courses, lectures, trade fair, colloquium, etc.

A few metres away from them, is the gymnasium, which, as at now, remains the biggest hall on the Makepe Campus. There are about 30 sociologists, anthropologists, economists, researchers and communications experts there. The experts that came from Europe, USA and Africa had been meeting in the hall since Tuesday, April 26 to discuss how best communication could be used in the development of their various countries. The Rector of the University, Prof. Bruno Bekolo Ebe, who had opened the international colloquium, was, alongside other staff members and students, in attendance.

Elsewhere on the same campus, precisely towards the sporting complex, was an on-going trade fair. It was said to have been organised by the students (all levels) of Ecole Supérieure de Science Economique et Commercial, ESSEC, which is a faculty of the university. Their intention, The Post learnt, was to open up to the outer business world, and to enable them to create contacts that could enable them to get internships in different business enterprises.

The Post also learnt that some final year students of the same ESSEC, were writing their exams. Such was the atmosphere at the University of Douala at a time when the University of Yaounde and Buea were striking. Such was the state of affairs at the University of Douala while two had already died in Buea as a result of the strike action.

Any Strike in the Making?

But the question on every lip was whether the University of Douala, in particular, which is known for its radicalism, was going to join its sisters of Buea and Yaoundé. It was assumed that the colloquium at Douala University had stopped the students from going on strike too.

Also, it was thought that the students' trade fair could not be stopped for the sake of a strike. But the Rector knew that this was not impossible. Hence, he called a crisis meeting with all class delegates, during which he asked them to submit all their grievances. They did. But contrary to what the students of Douala presented; four most pressing demands – the abolition of fees, the availability of scholarships for meritorious students, the provision of good food at the school refectory and provisions made for good toilets on campus.

The Post gathered that Prof. Bekolo recorded all their grievances, promising to channel them to the higher authorities. Since then, tempers are said to have been cooled. However, this reporter was told that due to the presence of pro-administration spies on campus, concertation among the students is taking place off-campus to ensure that “the presence of Douala is felt.”

Our source, who said the University of Douala is determined to close the strike, no matter when or what measures would have already been taken by the government, said there is suspicion among them that if Yaoundé becomes calm when no concrete measures had been taken in Douala, it would mean they have been bribed by the government to quell down the strike. He said that the FCFA 2.4 billion given to the University of Yaoundé I is only good enough to repair toilets and refectories. That the issue of scholarship is not due to lack of money, but it goes to some individuals who do not merit the scholarships.

The issue of scrapping school fees, the source said, is another matter that is sacrosanct, given its urgency, reason why they should not be fooled with a few billions. The source said if they are contacted for compromise without real solutions, they would reject the proposals. “We hope our mates will not be easily fooled with promises, for us, we must go on strike, no matter how late. We are not going to be fooled with vague promises, if we do, it would mean drinking the blood of those who have so far died fighting for the cause of students in the University of Buea,” the source said. Of certain magnitude certain assistance. I hope this is the only way to help the people come out of their ignorance.

Police Arrest 45 Striking Students in Douala

By Mirabel Azangeh Tandafor

Police in Douala, Wednesday, May 3, arrested 45 striking students of the University of Douala. The students had on May 2 joined their mates in the Universities of Yaoundé I and Buea in a strike action that began in Yaoundé some three weeks ago. The students were bundled into police vans and taken for detention at the Mobile Intervention Unit, GMI II and Judicial Police in

Bonanjo. They were, however, released in the evening and given FCFA 1000 each for their transport back to their various homes.

The Strike

About 7:30 am on May 2, about 7000 students blocked both the university campus at Makepe and Ndogbong, they split up in groups and made sure no class held that morning in any of the Amphitheatres. They booed and jeered some students who sat waiting for their lecturers. For those that were already lecturing, they were chased out and benches ransacked.

Meanwhile, another group of students temporarily blocked the roads from Camtel Bepanda, PB Cité SIC Ndokotti that converge at the Ange Raphael roundabout right in front of the university. This was rather short-lived because law enforcement officers soon swooped on the students. They took up positions on the university campus. The Rector, Prof. Bruno Bekolo Ebe, asked the police to stay in the classrooms and urged the students to come for classes, which they did.

On the Ndogbong campus, the students launched the strike with the national anthem and hoisted a black 'flag' in honour of students slain in Buea. By 3:00 pm, a few students were loitering on campus while most of their comrades sat in front of the school gate brandishing placards. Some of them read thus: "Campus mort", "Chirac dialogue avec les étudiants, Biya et ses ministres nous insultes," "on veut les bourse," "on ne veut plus cinquante mille."

Day Two

On day two of the strike, things turned sour for some students who turned out in black attires as agreed the previous day. At about 8:30 am, the very first victim of the police was a certain Lazare Wowe. As soon as he was spotted in front of the school gate distributing red bands to students to tie round their arms, police and gendarmes who had kept vigil on campus, bundled him on to their jeep and took him away. Like his other mates, Wowe, a third year political science student, was dressed in black. The Post later learnt he had been appointed Secretary General of SOS Student Union accused by the authorities of fomenting the strike in Douala.

By press time, at least 45 students were said to have been arrested. No one got scared. Instead, some students took up conspicuous positions by the roadside, and from time to time, picked up quarrel with the gendarmes and police. Only a first year law class held thanks to the presence of gendarmes in front of the classroom.

On the first day of strike, a group of students formed the SOS Student Union, off campus. After creating a bureau, they decided they will mourn the victims of Buea for four days.

Students' Demands

The President of the Student Union, Moussa Njoya, told *The Post* after the election of the bureau on May 3 that they want the Minister of Higher Education, Jacques Fame Ndongo, to resign, and that University Rectors, Deans and Heads of Department should henceforth be elected. He said they want the registration fee of FCFA 50.000 scrapped, scholarships restored; an investigation of studying conditions and the systematic deliverance of certificates and transcripts after studies; the completion of syllabuses before examinations; making available to students texts on the reforms on state universities; according one year for Master's thesis; availability of medical and sanitation faculties for students; national policy on the employment and integration of graduates after studies; laboratory equipment; libraries; authorisation of student syndicates and effective control of the university restaurant.

Njoya pledged that they were not going to succumb to any pressure to stop the strike till their demands have been met. "We will strike for at least 10 months if they don't heed our demands," he said. He added that the move would remain pacific unless any of them is kidnapped, killed, threatened or attacked. After the arrest of Wowe, the Vice President of the SOS Student Union, Cletus Tse Tabang, told this reporter on May 4 that top on the list grievances was the release of their mates.

May 06, 2005 at 01:44 PM in [Special Report: The University of Buea Crisis](#) | [Permalink](#)

Comments

The true story Cameroon must change please the post since you have close contact with these striking students please let us abroad know the means by which we can support financially to beef up the contribution and to let meaningful change to come.

Posted by: [shuche](#) | May 6, 2005 02:20 PM

A revolution is just beginning. The mighty are on their way out. The oppressors are soon to account for their years of autocracy. The time of change has come. Be my witness. Quote me.

Posted by: [Eddie](#) | May 6, 2005 04:44 PM

“Chirac dialogue avec les étudiants, Paul Biya et ses ministres nous insulte” You know folks, most of our problems in Cameroon continue to yield calamity because of the distance between the desperate mass and the executive arm. Paul Biya alone puts on a multitudinous facet of a leader. Personally I’m confused if he’s a military leader, a newly styled African monarch like late Eyadema or just a confused aristocrat who wants to give so much importance to his long undeserved seat by standing off. I mean the reality is often so far from our president. A simple plea or talk of concern in public from this president would not reduce the value of his coat, the image he builds of himself and better still, it could just be the magic potion, even if we know concrete issues need redress. When the ministers step into this imbroglio, it seems they always want to test how much political science they’ve studied or gained on the field. Fame Ndongso, who have you trying to impress over the years, with your politicking, high sounding but low yielding language .You might just be daydreaming if you think students can’t decipher senseless rhetoric from concrete solutions. Whoever told Goliath his challenger or conqueror would be little David, he’d swear a million impossibilities as to that. My little political science tells me in Cameroon, we should count on the students for change not on the ballot boxes. Remember, we already lost two and so the only valuable reason for compromise is the scrapping of 50.000frs fees. To hell with the “political 2.4billionfrs”, can you justify how this will be disbursed or spent, and if at all just 10million frs will really get to the students heat. Dear students remain assured of support from

the diaspora, our sincere regards and admiration for your courage. We see through you the great Cameroon of tomorrow without “the chop broke pots” Keep up.

Posted by: [Mbu. B](#) | May 6, 2005 10:22 PM

Fellow students the only thing I can say is courage brothers and sisters do not stumble thou thy paths be dark as night, there's a cloud to guide the humble trust in God and do the right. If the only right thing to bring change to our motherland is by students strike then it is worth it 'cost it will go down in History that students of the university of Buea (a peaceful town) got pregnant and brought forth the most wanted; long awaited change our forefathers like Late Dr Endeley had advocated for in the years gone by. To the University authority, as well as the government my only advice is that even if nothing is done they should at least hearken to the voice of the students. Maybe by listening to them, they will feel better off – I am saying this considering the effects and the aftermaths of the French Revolutions. Please Government try to do something. Students once more courage do not stumble.

Posted by: [Monique Monono](#) | May 7, 2005 04:46 AM

LUNDI, 09 MAI, 2005 - 06:19

Société : Universités d'Etat : Dschang dans la grève

Un car de la police brûlé à Buea. L'Addec lève le mot d'ordre à Yaoundé. Un syndicat d'étudiants en gestation. Une interview du recteur de l'université de Douala.

Michel Ferdinand avec Carole Yemelong (correspondante)

Les étudiants entrent dans la danse

Des barricades à l'entrée du campus ont perturbé les cours vendredi dernier. La grogne qui paralyse depuis quelques semaines certaines universités d'Etat, a atteint les campus A et B de Dschang, le vendredi 6 mai dernier. Il s'est agi pour les étudiants des cinq établissements de cette

institution, de boycotter les enseignements afin d'attirer l'attention des responsables académiques sur leurs conditions précaires d'études. La colère des manifestants s'est traduite par la pose des barricades à l'entrée principale de l'université. Des caisses de Call Box transportées dans les environs ont permis de bloquer la circulation des véhicules.

Tout a commencé autour de 6h lorsque des étudiants ont décidé d'empêcher leurs camarades et des enseignants de rejoindre les Amphithéâtres. A ce moment, l'unique revendication portait sur le paiement des primes d'entraînement et de mérite des étudiants sportifs. Mais, au fur et à mesure que la foule devenait importante, l'on a enregistré d'autres doléances. Le ton est monté dans les rangs des étudiants informés que des hommes en tenue avaient envahi certains coins du campus.

En plus des revendications connues sur le plan national, à l'instar de la suppression des frais universitaires et le retour de la bourse, les étudiants de Dschang posent des problèmes spécifiques : électrification et construction des salles de classe, programmation normale des cours, harmonisation du retrait des relevés de notes, retour des filières supprimées dans certaines facultés... La liste est contenue dans une note lue par le porte-parole du collectif des étudiants et destinée au recteur de l'université de Dschang, Jean Louis Dongmo qui a tenté de convaincre les manifestants à surseoir au mouvement de grève.

Paiement des Primes

Les étudiants dénoncent en outre l'attitude des enseignants qui les renvoient régulièrement vers des photocopies. La colère est perceptible dans la foule. Le recteur prend finalement place sur une sorte d'estrade au sein du campus, et se montre étonné : "Ce mouvement me fait penser qu'on ne vous a pas répercuté ce qu'on s'est dit mercredi dernier avec les délégués d'étudiants", dit Jean Louis Dongmo. Le 4 mai dernier en effet, le recteur de l'université de Dschang a discuté avec des représentants d'étudiants, au moment où la crise estudiantine a pris de l'ampleur à l'Institut universitaire de technologie Fotso Victor à Bandjoun. Des réponses étaient cependant encore attendues par rapport aux préoccupations des étudiants. Par ailleurs, la majorité des cops estime que leurs représentants sont facilement corruptibles, et qu'ils ne peuvent pas leur faire confiance.

En vue d'un apaisement, Jean Louis Dongmo a publiquement pris certaines décisions. C'est ainsi qu'un plat de nourriture coûtera désormais 100 FCFA au restaurant universitaire, au lieu de 150. Les grévistes voulaient qu'on le réduise à 50 FCFA. Le recteur de Dschang a également promis de payer "dans les six heures", les primes des sportifs. De même qu'il s'est prononcé en faveur de la correction des copies de onze étudiants de biologie végétale niveau III, retirées du circuit pour inscription irrégulière. Pas assez pour calmer les étudiants. Surtout quand ils pensent que Jean Louis Dongmo veut simplement les distraire, en évitant les problèmes prioritaires. Autant de choses qui font que les étudiants de Dschang maintiennent leur mot d'ordre de grève : "Nous allons manifester tous les jours jusqu'à ce que nos problèmes soient résolus", a indiqué un leader étudiantin.

LUNDI, 09 MAI, 2005 - 06:13

Société : Grève estudiantine : Les paparazzis traqués à Douala

Les chasseurs d'images sont la nouvelle cible de la police et la gendarmerie dans les campus.

Léger Ntiga

La grogne estudiantine à l'université de Douala a connu une étape supplémentaire vendredi dernier avec la visite du gouverneur de la Région du Littoral, Gounoko Haounaye sur le principal campus de cette institution. A l'occasion, une marée humaine habillée en noir et assise à même le sol devant le portail, a manifesté son inquiétude à propos du sort des leaders estudiantins annoncés disparus. Mais la foule d'étudiants s'est surtout mobilisée pour saluer la mémoire de l'étudiant Gilbert Nforlem Forbi, dont la mise en bière a eu lieu la veille, jeudi 05 mai 2005 à Buéa. Tenus à l'œil par des dizaines d'antigangs en civil, les étudiants étaient encadrés par une centaine d'éléments de la police anti-émeutes.

Venu poursuivre les pourparlers commencés le 04 mai avec les leaders de Sos-solidarité estudiantine (Soes), Gounoko Haounaye, a-t-on appris, était également là pour faire une évaluation de la situation qui reste stationnaire dans les deux campus de l'université de Douala. Malgré le forcing du recteur Bekolo Ebe, qui a une nouvelle fois essuyé l'hostilité des manifestants, les cours n'ont toujours pas repris. Pour cette semaine, à en croire les leaders

estudiantins, le mouvement pourrait se durcir. “Nous sommes en train de nous organiser. Les résidences universitaires sont assiégées. Nous avons demandé à nos camarades de quitter la zone. D’où l’exode. Mais nous devons nous retrouver à l’université tous les jours. Nous travaillons pour contourner la logique de répression d’en face. Nous tenons à suivre la démarche de non-violence de nos camarades de Yaoundé I. Toutes nos énergies sont déployées pour rendre notre mouvement plus efficace. Et vous pouvez nous croire, nous tiendrons dans la durée contre l’usure qui est la méthode adoptée par les autorités”, précise Njoya Moussa, le président de Soes.

Police académique

Le fait d’arme de la journée de vendredi dernier reste cependant la nouvelle mission de la “police académique” (police qui assiège les campus) à savoir, pourchasser les journalistes et surtout les preneurs d’images. Il était ainsi impossible, plus que les deux premiers jours, de faire quelque image dans les environs de l’université. Le cameraman de TV5 qui tentait de faire des prises de vue sur le mouvement de grève des étudiants de Douala en a fait la triste expérience. “Il faut prendre tous ces appareils photos qui circulent et contribuent à faire diffuser des images de policiers aux prises avec les étudiants”, a ordonné un cadre de police à ses hommes vendredi dernier. Et un autre du même grade d’ajouter, “vous êtes avertis. Je ne veux plus voir une seule image de policiers dans les médias. Désormais arrangez-vous pour que cette instruction soit respectée. Prenez là comme un commandement!”, a-t-il menacé.

En attendant, des mots d’ordre et tracts sur la poursuite de la grève continuent de circuler. Le 04 mai dernier, le travail de mise en place d’une convergence de la solidarité estudiantine autour de la crise actuelle dans les universités d’Etat au Cameroun, s’est matérialisé à Douala par la naissance d’une Coordination syndicale estudiantine du Cameroun (Csec). Les premiers documents ont été paraphés par le président de Soes, Njoya Moussa et Messi Bala, le secrétaire général de l’Addec. Certaines indiscretions laissent entendre que l’ambition de cette convergence estudiantine est de s’élargir aux autres universités déjà en grève.

LUNDI, 09 MAI, 2005 - 06:11

Société : Bruno Bekolo Ebé : L'université ne peut pas fonctionner sans les droits universitaires. Tout en soutenant certaines revendications des grévistes, le recteur de Douala pense qu'il est impossible de supprimer les frais.

Propos recueillis par Lazare Kolyang

Q : Quelle est selon vous la pertinence des revendications des étudiants à l'université de Douala ?

S'agissant de ces problèmes, il faut d'abord distinguer ceux qui ne sont pas de la compétence du recteur de l'université de Douala, et ceux qui sont propres à notre université. Je dirai sans ambages que les problèmes que posent les étudiants sont des problèmes vrais. Et les étudiants ont raison de les poser. Je le dis d'autant plus que moi-même je pose ces problèmes. Dès ma prise de fonction, j'ai entrepris et rédigé un rapport, sans complaisance, de la situation que j'ai trouvée à l'université de Douala. Sur le plan humain, infra structurel, sur le plan social, sur le plan des équipements, etc. Et ceux qui ont couvert la rentrée solennelle ont suivi mon discours qui était un résumé de la situation. Et je pense que ce résumé était suffisamment clair. Je dis donc que les problèmes que posent les étudiants de Douala sont des problèmes objectifs, ce serait faire preuve de mauvaise foi que de les nier. Mais là où il y a divergence c'est par rapport aux moyens utilisés pour poser et surtout résoudre ces problèmes.

Q : Que représentent les frais universitaires dans le budget de l'université de Douala ? Est-il possible aujourd'hui de fonctionner sans ces frais ?

Je commencerai par dire qu'il n'est pas possible de fonctionner sans ces 50.000 francs CFA en tenant compte de ma formation. La formation du capital humain a un coût et il faut que quelqu'un supporte ces coûts. Si l'Etat décide maintenant que les étudiants ne payent pas, il faudra qu'il trouve ailleurs d'autres sources pour financer la formation, quitte à y renoncer ce qui serait extrêmement grave. Naturellement, il est serein de le faire par l'accroissement de la fiscalité, par la création des taxes. C'est un choix qui peut être fait, mais il faut qu'on en mesure les implications.

Pour ce qui est de l'université de Douala, les 50.000 francs CFA que les étudiants payent représentent pour environ 16 à 17 000 étudiants à peu près 850 millions de francs CFA sur un budget pour l'année 2005 d'à peu près 5,5 à 6 milliards de francs CFA. C'est un apport dans la situation de pénurie qui

est celle des ressources des universités d'Etat. On n'affecte pas en tant que telles ces sommes à des utilisations précises. C'est l'enveloppe globale contenant ce que payent les étudiants, la subvention de l'Etat et les autres ressources que nous recevons notamment des coopérations qui forme un tout qui est donc affectée à un certain nombre d'usages dont les priorités sont les dépenses académiques, c'est-à-dire tout ce qui permet d'assurer les enseignements, de distribuer la documentation notamment pour les travaux dirigés et les travaux pratiques. Les autres priorités c'est la documentation et la recherche. Sans oublier les prestations dues aux enseignants. Voilà un peu les priorités suivant lesquelles on affecte, non pas seulement ce que payent les étudiants mais, l'ensemble des ressources dont dispose l'université.

L'Etat honore-t-il toujours ses engagements ?

C'est un problème récurrent de l'ensemble des institutions universitaires. Nous ne recevons pas toujours dans les délais souhaités les sommes annoncées au titre des subventions. Effectivement, parlant par exemple de l'université de Douala, il arrive de ne pas recevoir les dotations prévues pour le budget d'investissement. C'est pour cela que nous avons décidé de consacrer une part des ressources propres de l'université aux financements des investissements, c'est-à-dire pour régler les problèmes d'infrastructures, d'équipements et les problèmes de conditions de vie au sein du campus. Ce problème de retard dans les décaissements est le reflet de la conjoncture qui prévaut au niveau des finances publiques.

Douala Varsity Strike: Bribery Suspicion Splits Student Union

By Mirabel Azanghe Tandafor

A split occurred in the University of Douala Student Union, May 11, due to bribery suspicion and accusations of betrayal. The Moussa Njoya led SOS Student Union, which was formed to plead the cause of fellow students, has now to grapple with a rival union called SOS Solidarité, "la voix de l'étudiant". It is headed by Billy Patipe and Fosso Kanga Noe, as President and Vice President, respectively. The Union is bent on continuing the strike.

Njoya and his entire executive have been charged with receiving bribe to stop the strike. The Post learnt that not only have they stayed away from campus, but also their phone lines have gone dead. Patipe, reportedly told a French newspaper on May 11 that the leaders of the SOS Student Union have failed to show up for meetings they had scheduled this week. He said contrary to the Rector's threats published on May 10, warning students not to stand in groups of more than four, some students had organised off-campus meetings which they expected the executives of the SOS Student Union to attend in vain.

At the Douala University campus on the morning of May 12, armed police and gendarmes dispersed students who blocked the entrance to the main gate into the campus at Ange Raphael, Makepe. No one was injured. They kept watch all day long on the campus.

Body of Evidence

According to a release distributed on campus on May 12, the new Union warned students who still remain faithful to the cause to beware. "Some of those we took for leaders have betrayed the cause for which we have fought so hard," the release stated. It added, "These renegades, who till recently, were still haranguing the student population, have behaved like Judas Iscariot." The release signed by both Patipe and Kamga, gave statistics implicating CPDM bigwig, Mayor and MP, Francoise Foning, Littoral Governor, Gonoukou Haounaye and the Douala Varsity Rector, Prof Bruno Bekolo Ebe.

According to the release, Njoya Moussa, who headed the strike in Douala, stands accused of receiving an undisclosed sum of money and promises of being granted asylum in France should he abandon the struggle. Same goes for his Vice, Cletus Tse Tabang, and the Secretary General of the group, Lazard Kolwe Wowe, who are accused of receiving money from the Governor, Foning and the Rector. It also stated that both have been promised asylum in France, and documents for Kolwe are already being processed. Others include Rodrigue Noupa (also promised a political exile by Mme Foning), Bell a.k.a le Philosophe, Diuedonné Tedjisse (promised sponsor in ENAM by Foning), Guy Laurant Team Kouam, also promised by Foning to facilitate his entrance into ENAM. Michel Teupe, on his part, has been promised an entrance into EMIA. The sums stated ranged from FCFA

300.000 each (offered by the Governor), FCFA 200.000 (from Foning) and FCFA 80.000 (from the Rector).

The Post gathered that the strike is continuing because the Minister of Higher Education, Jacques Fame Ndong, has not been to Douala for “dialogue”. Unlike in the University of Yaoundé I, where rehabilitation work has started, nothing is being done in Douala. On May 11, the entrance examinations into the Technical Teacher’s Training Faculty of the University, ENSET, were poorly attended. The Rector had earlier warned that the exam would not be repeated.

May 13, 2005 at 08:14 AM in [News](#) | [Permalink](#)

Unity Is Strength - ADDEC SG

By Mirabel Azangeh Tandafor



Jacques Missi Balla, Secretary General of the Association for the Defence of the Rights of Students of Cameroon, ADDEC, who is still to recover from the pangs of a hunger strike he masterminded in Yaounde, has come to discover that disorder developed during the strike because of disunity.

While on a brief trip to take the “temperature” of the strike at the University of Douala, he told *The Post* in this interview that no matter how long it takes, students of all the state universities will fight till total change comes. He said the FCFA 4 billion and the highly publicised scholarship award ceremonies being organised by the Higher Education Minister are not going to stop them. He also deplored gendarme brutality on students. Excerpts:

The Post: Why are you in Douala?

Jacques Missi Balla: I am here to reinforce students’ solidarity. But before that I arrived in Douala after escaping arrest. The President of the association, Mouaffo, was arrested in my presence, and so I had to escape. I then used the opportunity to come and reinforce the student movement here. I have just been negotiating a platform for a national syndicate with the President of the SOS Student Union here in Douala.

The Post: Are your grievances the same?

Jacques Missi Balla: But for some exceptions our grievances are the same. All state universities are facing almost the same problems, and so it’s good that we really agree on certain things in order to come out of these crises for good, the specificities of the grievances notwithstanding.

The Post: Have you tried to compare these grievances?

Jacques Missi Balla: It would seem they are independent of each other. We have made comparisons. Douala has 15 grievances. We have 11. Those of Douala have some pertinent ones that are peculiar only to them. Those of ADDEC are general and national. It would be very good if I examine those for Douala, and later those for Dschang and Buea. Our unity would be our strength.

The Post: Are you in communication with all the universities?

Jacques Missi Balla: Yes. We have relations everywhere – on all the university campuses. I, for one, have studied at the University of Douala. It was there at Douala that I got my first degree in letters. I was also the President of the Faculty for three years. The present President of SOS Student Union, Njoya Mousa, took over from me when I was leaving for my Masters programme in Yaoundé. We have also attended several inter-university meetings together. Now that we have this battle ahead of us, it is good we put our heads together and fight till we attain victory.

The Post: What is the situation in Yaoundé now? We learnt the strike has been called off?

Jacques Missi Balla: There are at least 1500 gendarmes on campus and over 600 policemen both in uniform and mufti. They are there maltreating students; firing teargas canisters here and there to scare away students. The campus has been sealed. That is about the same thing I have noticed at the University of Douala. We learnt the strike was to be very peaceful. But we are all living witnesses of what is happening now. There was a very serious confusion. The strike that was launched in Yaounde was a continuation of the hunger strike of students of the Universities of Yaounde, which started on April 13. The hunger strike was suspended a week ago to permit the students replenish themselves so as to be able to discuss properly on friendly a basis with the Minister of Higher Education. Till date, our students (of Yaounde) have been very pacific. They have been calm, even when teargas is used to scare them off. We deplore the barbarism of the uniformed men who killed two of our comrades in Buea. We denounce the multiple arrests taking place here in Douala and Yaounde, Buea and Dschang. We still want to observe a pacific movement so as to make our parents, friends and all those observing Cameroonian universities know that the Cameroonian student is mature and knows his rights.

The Post: What do you think about the sum disbursed by the government to start resolving students' problems, and the FCFA 100.000 scholarships being given to students who performed well at the GCE A-level or BAC?

Jacques Missi Balla: I must say we are thankful to the government for this move. By taking these measures, it means the government has come to discover that we are perfectly correct. It is, however, important to note that this sum and the gestures the Minister is making so much publicity about, is just an advance of what the state has to disburse to universities. These are subventions for state universities. These are found in the 2005 state budget.

The Post: How?

Jacques Missi Balla: The university is being financed by two sources. First, what students pay in as fees, and by state subvention from the Ministry of Finance. But it would seem, the Ministry of Finance hardly gives all of this money. They do not even disburse it on time. What they are doing now is that they are collecting remnants of what was left of these subventions from yester-years to add up to what is due universities in 2005. With this, they

want to make the public believe they have made a miracle of releasing close to FCFA 5 billion just for the sake of universities. It is unjust when they talk of equipment in the lab and so forth, we know they include all these in the state budget, though it never reaches us. Cameroonian students are no longer interested in figures, news reports or Minister's gesture, but the concretisation of actions and decisions taken by the government.

The Post: Does this, in any way, dissuade you from continuing with the strike?

Jacques Missi Balla: Not at all. When the students ask for the cancellation of the FCFA 50.000 registration fee, what we want is that by next academic year, (2005-2006), no student should be asked the same fee again and it should continue that way. That is what we want for each of the grievances raised. They should not feel that by attempting these two measures, they will stop us just now.

The Post: What are the grievances of ADDEC?

Jacques Missi Balla: Scholarships to students in higher institutions of learning, financial assistance to students doing research, the promotion of the status of the Cameroonian student and the suppression of the FCFA 50.000. These are the main ones. All the others such as good refectory food and toilets on campus are included in the state budget, and they collect money for them. We are now protesting for those things we deem legitimate, but which are left out or ignored.

The Post: Information reaching us has it that some supposed student delegates are also spies for the administration. Is this true, and have you detected some among you?

Jacques Missi Balla: It is very true. But you see, with the theory penetration is a two-way thing. The administration has its spies among us, and we, too, have ours among them. We are not stopping anyone from following his heart, we know them. Believe me, a student who feels the pinch would not take sides with the administration. We had known all those who could betray us and kept them away from our ranks. The only thing they did was to take to streets saying the strike was over.

The Post: Do you feel threatened?

Jacques Missi Balla: I, myself, very surprised that I am still in it today. I got very frightened two weeks ago when the police molested me. I was afraid I would die, but I got well after medical attention. This morning also I got

frightened when the President was arrested. After everything, fright is natural. But for me, if I must act, I simply put it away for that moment.

The Post: Last word?

Jacques Missi Balla: As long as Minister Jacques Fame Ndongo does not meet our demands, the strike continues.

The Post: But you want him out?

Jacques Missi Balla: Our comrades of the University of Douala have that point as one of their grievances. Since we are waiting in solidarity with them that is also our wish. We, however, do not believe that just changing people without changing the system will be a proper solution to our problems.

Douala Varsity Strike: Striking Students Want Police Out

By Mirabel Azanghe Tandafor

A meeting aimed at resolving the strike at the University of Douala came to nought following failure by the authorities and some of the striking students to agree on the departure of the gendarmes and policemen who have been patrolling the University campuses and its environs, since the strike broke out on May 2.

Holding on the Campus One gymnasium on May 6, the meeting was attended by 20 student delegates and non-delegates, the Rector, Prof. Bruno Bekolo Ebe, Littoral Governor, Gonoukou Haounaye, and some other top-ranking security officials of the Region. The meeting was a follow-up to an earlier one between members of the SOS Student Union and the Governor in the night of May 4, during which they were called upon to resume classes while awaiting a favourable response from the government.

But, at the May 5 meeting, the SOS Student Union executives explained to the authorities present that if at all they had to call off the strike, five points would have to be met: that those who took part in the strike should neither be victimised nor punished thereafter; that all classes that held during the strike period would be repeated for the benefit of those who were absent; that all absences from classes registered during the period would be annulled; all practical lessons would be repeated, and lastly, that the security forces must leave both campuses.

The Governor complied with the other points, but for the last. Hear him: “We can’t take the risk of taking away the security men from the campuses. You may decide to destroy as your friends elsewhere are doing.” He said all the other conditions could be regulated by the Rector, but the government alone had the powers of sending away the security men.

“It is for purely security reason you know it,” he told the students. He added that the men in uniform would go if the students agreed to resume classes on the same day, and to continue in the following days.

The students, who had started making their way out of the hall, booed and jeered the Rector as he tried to corroborate what the Governor had said. The President of the union later told The Post that no deal had been struck.

“We are not calling off any strike action as long as those men keep hanging on in this campus. How can we learn in such an environment?” He said their mere presence, without violence, was scary and reminded them of the circumstances that led to the deaths of the students in Buea. Hence, he declared, “ghost campus continues,” noting that they were not going to force anyone who had given up hoping that change would come through a strike.

4 May 2005, Dschang University Students on Strike

By Peter Mu-nyete

Students of the University of Dschang have also joined in the nationwide strike after their sister universities of Yaoundé I, Douala and Buea respectively. Some students reportedly travelled from the University of Yaoundé I to reinforce the Dschang strike. Sources told The Post that on May 4, the Rector, Professor Jean Louis Dongmo, held a meeting with all responsible officials of the University, including the students’ delegates.

During the meeting some key issues were addressed and the grievances tabled by the students were shelved by the Rector. It was reported that the Rector threatened that students who dared go on strike would suffer.

But on May 6, a handful of students was seen gathered at the entrance of the University. When news reached the Rector that students were planning to go on strike, he and his collaborators went out to verify. The students are said to have told the Rector that things were not going on well with them and they needed to have a dialogue with the Rector.

It is reported that the Rector did not address the students at the entrance of Campus A. Rather he wanted them to move to the flag post for him to address them there. The students are said to have refused to move to the flag post where the Rector waited for them. Later on he addressed the students at the entrance as the forces of law and order milled about.

On May 9, the students tabled the following grievances, which they said must be met before classes could resume: the total cancellation of registration fees; the resignation of the Rector due to poor management; reopening of some specialised field of studies that were suppressed in the Faculty of Letters; the departure of Prof. Minfondi, Dean of the Department of Sciences and Jean Paul Komon, Vice Dean of Economics; the recognition of the results of Plant Biology Level Three by Prof. Minfondi; the construction of public toilets on the campus and installation of potable water points on campus since students spend about FCFA 500 daily to have motorbike riders bring them 20 litres of water; the cancellation of fictitious and tribal-based commissions for the preparation of University games; that an end be put to the monopoly of COPS express transport service within the campus and that free access be given to motorbikes, which are faster and time saving; the tarring of the main road going across from the main entrance to upper campus; the acquisition of an ambulance for emergency cases; the reduction of the price of a plate of food from FCFA 150 to FCFA 50.

The students also accused the Rector of having bribed some students with the sum of FCFA 5000 each to spy on those leading the strike. They said they want toilets put quickly as they ease themselves in the nearby bushes with the risk of being bitten by snakes.

However, some abandoned toilets on Campus A, B and C have been reopened in preparation for the forthcoming University games slated for July 9-16.

Conclusion

The chapter has examined the strikes in Douala and Dschang universities. More has been garnered from Douala in terms of the magnitude and intensity of grievances of the strike. Compared to Yaoundé and Buea, the students' commitment to strike action appeared to be less in Douala and Dschang universities. There are various reasons for this. The most important

are the following. Having learnt from the experiences at Yaounde and Buea, the university authorities in Douala and Dschang were less prepared to rely on the forces of law and order to settle the strike. They instead displayed a readiness to negotiate with the student leaders and to make concessions. Moreover, the students in Dschang and Douala were less united than in Yaounde and Buea. Particularly in Douala there has been a split in the students' union. One faction accusing the other of corruption.

The next chapter takes us back to Buea where the students' strike entered a higher gear with physical confrontation between the students and the forces of law and order.

Use of Force and Loss of Life and Property at the University of Buea

Introduction

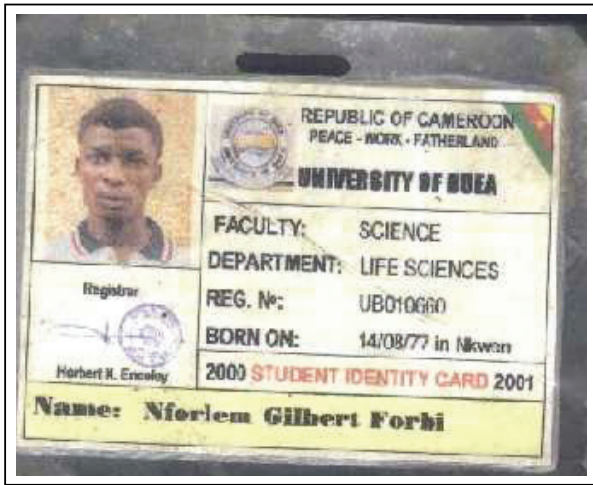
The early introduction of the police and gendarmes into the context of a student strike at the University of Buea quickly bred a dialectic of violence which became the interpretive lens through which actions were viewed by the different collective parties involved. Within the power asymmetries which characterised the opposition of unarmed students against armed police, group think triumphed with both sides claiming victimhood, while accusing the other of violent behaviour. Both students and the local community inhabiting the Molyko area were trapped in the clutch of a rabid police force far more intent on sowing terror than restoring law and order.

It is within this storm that two students lost their lives to police bullets; meanwhile no casualties were reported on the part of the police. This was also the asymmetric space within which university property was destroyed when the student protesters went out of control. Given the manner in which the university community fades with the non-university community, this violence gripped the entire Molyko area, ensnaring non-university actors who also fell victim to the harsh beatings of a police force gone awry. Some lost lives, some their dignity, some lost property and business came to a halt. Meanwhile responsibility for personal and communal reconstruction fell on the shoulders of private individuals.

The sequence of violence in Buea, even as students sought to pay their last respects to their fallen peers, points to a larger culture of oppression, within which government sought to terrorize protesting students into giving up their demands. *Vox populi* segments of newspapers capture individual experiences in the eye of the storm. Meanwhile, running commentaries which follow the newspaper clippings are passionate and capture a broad diversity of perspectives on the strike, with an underlying tone of bereavement for the lives lost.

Police Kill Two in UB Strike
By Pegue Manga

Riot Police in Buea have shot two students to death in the on-going Buea University strike. The two boys, Embwam Aloysius, a level 400 Environmental Science student and Gilbert Folem²⁹, a master’s degree



Geology student were shot at different intervals in Molyko between 2:30 and 3:00 pm. Embwam received a bullet on his head while Folem was shot on his chest. The remains of the victims are in the Buea District Hospital Mortuary.

The students have continued stoning.

They mounted road blocks and burnt tires on the highway. We will update the story as it unfolds.

April 28, 2005 at 01:58 PM in [Breaking News](#) | [Permalink](#)

Comments

It’s very disappointing that both the Cameroonian ruling party CPDM and the main opposition parties cannot take advantage of this sad students’ strike situation. I see the opportunity that Cameroonians for once must come together, recognise there is a problem in our university system and find adequate ways of fixing them. Until we recognise there is a problem, we will never sit down and address it and until we address the problems of our educational system, we will never fix them. Thanks.

Simon Pierre Ateba, Lagos, Nigeria.

²⁹ Full name is actually Nforlem Gilbert Forbi

Posted by: [Simon Pierre Ateba](#) | April 28, 2005 02:41 PM

Maybe this is the God-given time to effect the long-awaited change in Cameroon. The civil society should join in!! The on-going strikes in the different state Universities are not unconnected with the misery lived by the majority of Cameroonians today; the price hikes on basic commodities, the upsurge on the price of fuel, the increment in taxes, etc. have made life to the people meaningless. If taxi drivers and “buyam-sellams” nation-wide should join that may be the beginning of the end of the New Dealist kleptocracy.

Posted by: [Victor](#) | April 28, 2005 03:01 PM

A university is a democratic institution. We should try to reason out the issues. Strikes are a very good way of expressing one's self when you are in an oppressive regime like Dorothy Njeuma's. And let the 500frs police officers stay off the issue.

Posted by: [Ntchanang Mpafe](#) | April 28, 2005 03:14 PM

The confrontation did not start because students made “reasonable demands”. It started because Buea students were not mature enough, like their counterparts in Yaoundé, to channel their grievances in a non-violent manner, and they also made the foolhardy decision of taking their violence out of campus. Two students are dead, and this once, I will not put the blame on the CPDM, Biya or the university administration which tried to advise the students on a non-violent course of action. Let us count our dead and hopefully learn our lesson. Violence does not pay!!!

Posted by: [Polycarp Abumbe](#) | April 28, 2005 03:22 PM

At a time when the university students need the support of society, especially the organized opposition, we are failing them. It is a painful feeling for the students who today are at the forefront of the struggle when they look behind only to realize that they are not being backed up or that they have been deserted. I empathise with you as someone who had been in the same situation.

For the victims and their families, please accept the condolences of your compatriots who feel for you. The students stood for a great vision, and their demands would be realized with the demise of this anachronistic system. At this moment of great division in the ranks of the exponents of change, at this hour when those who have posed as the voices of the struggling Kamerunian masses are quiet or helpless, we should discard old divisions, build resolve, build on our mutual compatibilities and the collective Kamerunian interest, reject any manifestation of self-centeredness and join hands in the march to bring down this inhuman system.

The new phase of the struggle should start now, even under the present conditions. In the end, those who died for a better society would be counted amongst the heroes of the new Kamerun.

Posted by: [Janvier Tchouteu](#) | April 28, 2005 03:26 PM

Oh my God!!! Don't tell us *The Post* that what we are reading is true? How many students did you say were killed? And for what reason? Strike? And why strike? Does it mean that there is no freedom of anything in Cameroon? In fact it is shameful and unbelievable that a Masters student and 400 level student are dead. The worst is shot by some thieves who call themselves police who don't even know how a secondary school class looks like. In fact Mr. Biya, Inoni and Cameroonians you should all know that we out here are monitoring with keen interest all what is going on out there and in fact let me spell it out clearly that we need just this type of incident to come up then we shall tell the CPDM and all the opposition in Cameroon that time is out for them and that those youths they always said will be future leaders of tomorrow are now adults and frustrated and will bite now. In fact the odds one is seeing in life are not merited and so brothers and sisters we are prepared to offer any help you need now to continue with the strike and of course it is high time we start soliciting aid from friends and well-wishers who are of course ready to give, to see that Cameroon changes for once.

I am by this mail pleading that all in diaspora please let us join heads together and see what we can do to fight this bad government. This is time to stand like one man and fight for our nation. Let not say tomorrow for no one knows what tomorrow has in stock like the bible says. Almost all the youths in Cameroon are today educated but how many are employed? It is high time the police force starts employing people from First degree into the

call since those illiterates have shown us that they can't maintain order. In fact I am disappointed and disillusioned and confused!!!

Posted by: [ani](#) | April 28, 2005 03:41 PM

Why on earth do these students need our support? What are these great societal goals that they are fighting for? Democracy in Cameroon, free and fair elections, substantive academic reforms in our universities? No, they are fighting for the quality of food in the school canteen and for the AMPHI 750 to be called AMPHI 650. What the hell!!!

No, they will not get our blind support because they are a far cry from the valiant student freedom fighters of the 1990s that fought for a new Cameroon and not for a new food menu. Mr. Janvier, you know what I am talking about. Let us not encourage stupidity just because we love anything that paints Cameroon's leaders in a bad light.

Once again, let these yam heads borrow a page from their francophone superiors in Ngoa-Ekele who have mastered the art of protest and pressure in the last ten years; you just never run foolishly into the streets to become fodder for trigger-happy "mberes". If you want to take them on, devise guerrilla tactics. Ask Elsie Chebe (AKA "Margaret Thatcher", the venerated UNIYAO student leader of the 1990s. Whatever the case, I extend my heartfelt condolences to the friends and families of the bereaved.

Posted by: [Polycarp Abumbe](#) | April 28, 2005 03:42 PM

What a disappointment. Two varsity students killed! It's quite lamentable. I see this from both sides. Firstly I applaud the students for their bravery this time around, but I believe the strike was so violent. Though they were executing their fundamental human rights by demonstrating they ought not to destroy state property. They could march on, carrying placards, boycotting classes, etc. Next time they will learn to organise a more organised strike.

Secondly I blame the authorities (the university, provincial, and ruling government). They have once more shown that the police are their repressive tool. These students had been having grievances but the university authorities had always been repressing them. They disbanded the students' union and created handicapped and puppet organisations in the name of faculty students unions which have got little or no say. When Herbert Endeley is

asked about these, he talks of decentralisation in government and links that to the university. That is bull shit. He is simply beating around the bush. The government gave instructions for that to happen and now two lives have been lost. Hope human rights watch groups take action. Adieu to the lost souls! They need to be honoured; they are real Martyrs!

Posted by: [lemu](#) | April 28, 2005 05:57 PM

Why would an occasion like this bring about riots directed at innocent students? If they took offense to the strike action as many would take offense if the streets are blocked, why did they not resort to peaceful means of arresting the situation rather than butcher students? It happened in Kumbo/Nkambe where the same groups of zealots were sadistic enough to behead a fellow human being a few years ago. What came out of it? Nothing; nobody was ever brought to book and so the blood-thirsty cannibals continued with the orgy. It happened during the launching of the SDF in the early 90s; again, nobody was charged, instead, those who perpetrated the mayhem were rewarded in one form or the other and families of the victims were left to wallow in perpetual misery. Why must the government stand by and watch this entrenched tradition of butchering innocent citizens? When would someone stand up for justice, investigate these killings and ensure that all culprits are sent to the electric chairs without delay? Does it mean that life is not sacred in the country called Cameroon? Does it follow that the lives being taken senselessly in the former west Cameroon are so unimportant that these genocidal tendencies do not warrant investigation? Does it mean that the crime of murder is less egregious in Cameroon, when it is perpetrated against innocent people? For those who sit on the side-lines and say, it is not happening to me, they better think again. Today, it is a student, tomorrow it could be you. Enough already!

It is my hope that this episode would mark a clean departure by Cameroon leaders from the politics of inaction. An independent body must be raised to investigate these killings. The punishment for such sadistic killings must be the gallows and those found guilty must face the penalty. Cameroon is supposed to be an “advanced democracy”, but the way it is being manipulated and dominated by those who feel that ownership of Cameroon is their birth right scares me. Sometimes I wonder if the people

perpetrating these killings understand that they are also doing a lot of damage to the nation as a whole!!

The foreign investments that the government has been logging in frequent trips to the US, France and China have become even more elusive. What sane investor would even contemplate coming to a nation where political uncertainty reigns supreme? Why would anyone want to invest in a country where students are easily killed for simply going on a strike? When foreigners hear about killings in Cameroon, they think it is being practiced all over the nation and because they are scared by what they are hearing, they choose to keep away. That is part of the reason why Cameroon is underdeveloped and would unfortunately continue to be.

Is it possible that Cameroon is cursed and that is why she is dabbling from one catastrophic snafu to another? A few weeks it was in Victoria today it is in Buea. Fellow Cameroonians, I hate to sound like I never see any good in Cameroon, but the truth is that I have not seen much. But is Cameroon really cursed? I think not, she is not cursed; instead, she is blessed with abundance of resources, people, and intellects of exceptional repute. She is rich in mineral resources and fertile land. One should not forget that Cameroon is the home of Roger Milla, it is the home of Tumi, it is the home of Biya, it is the home of Fru Ndi, and it was the home of Fonlon.

Cameroon's problems are man-made; the people who live in it are not serious; those in leadership positions are case "studies". Other countries experience the travails we have but their sense of patriotism, duty, honour and country transcend their selfish interests. The other countries have problems, with their university systems but they do not engage in killing under the guise of restoring public order. Is Cameroon truly cursed?

Posted by: [Monono Peter](#) | April 28, 2005 06:10 PM

Fellow Cameroonians, it is quite a tragedy when two of our compatriots are caught in police cross-fire. Is it a crime to be a university student? Cameroonians that have studied abroad know how democratic campus life can be. It's a shame when you come to think of the fact that most of our leaders studied abroad but have now refused to practice what they learnt at school. Should we assume that they went through school but school didn't go through them?

However, before we start shooting arrows at the Biya regime and its disgruntled thugs, we should perhaps pause for a few seconds and ask ourselves some hard questions. But before I say this, I think the way *The Post* published the story is wrong. Two things.

First, what exactly was the *raison d'être* of the strike? Second (and this is where *The Post* is dead wrong): The writer says that the students have continued stoning. This is very misleading because we don't know what the stoning is all about. Who is stoning whom? Of course being Cameroonians, it's not nuclear physics for us to decipher what it may mean. But this is the internet and we want international support for our cause. If *The Post* doesn't have much to tell us right now, then they should, maybe, tell us the little they know in a factual manner. Regardless of where you go, aggression has always been met with aggression from the forces of law and order, although the magnitude is sometimes different. If students in the USA go on strike and attack police officers in a life-threatening manner, rest assured that life-threatening force may be used on them. No? Of course that is part of the reason why we have similar problems of police brutality in the USA. But this issue is a very winding issue that we don't want to pursue here. All I am saying is that a Westerner will be appalled by the use of force on striking varsity students. But what about the fact that these students decide to engage these thugs in a battle in the first place? They shouldn't risk their lives unreasonably. After all, a cause is not just simply because someone dies for it.

We should also keep in mind that the government could not have been negotiating a peaceful solution in Yaoundé and resolve to use deadly force in Buea. This is the same government that promptly dismissed a police commissioner for the death of a cab driver in Limbe last month. All I ask *The Post* is to be precise with its reporting even if it means taking more time to get things right.

That said, I think we should encourage our brothers and sisters back home in this struggle. Even though we strongly support them, they should keep in mind that they cannot solve vertical problems with horizontal solutions. We need strikes but please they should be peaceful... say non-violent. They will only self-destroy if they employ destructive tactics. The Mau Mau days are long gone. Besides, why should they destroy equipment that their juniors will need tomorrow?

Finally, I think it is past time for the government to put in place the much-needed educational reforms in our beloved motherland. Our schools

are being run by kleptocrats who will apply only measures that will enable them pilfer from the impoverished students. The government should create a forum through which just grievances can be settled without the use of force. The government should keep in mind that it cannot continue to bully its way around with the people of Cameroon. One day...just one day.... It is important such attitude continued till this day.

Let us bow our heads and pray for the souls of these young warriors. They have died so that many others could live. Rest in peace brothers. Cameroon, we still love you. Peace.

Posted by: [Didi](#) | April 28, 2005 07:37 PM

Originally posted on UB Alumni Website

Le Quotidien Mutations : du VENDREDI, 29 AVRIL, 2005 - 07:43 **Société : Grève : Trois étudiants tués à Buea**

Gilbert Folem, étudiant en master de géologie et Aloysius Embwam, étudiant en 3^e année des sciences de l'environnement, sont les premières victimes du soulèvement estudiantin débuté à Buéa mercredi dernier. Les deux ont été victimes des coups de feu tirés par les forces de l'ordre entre 14h30 et 15h. Aloysius Embwam a été atteint à la tête et Gilbert Folem à la poitrine. Les corps sont depuis hier en fin d'après-midi à la morgue de l'hôpital de district de Buéa. Selon des informations de dernière heure, une 3^e victime de sexe féminin, elle aussi étudiante à l'université de Buéa, aurait rendu l'âme hier au même hôpital. Son état au moment de son admission en soins intensifs dans l'après-midi n'incitait déjà pas le corps médical à l'optimisme.

Alors qu'on était en droit de s'attendre hier à une accalmie après les négociations ouvertes entre les grévistes et le gouverneur de la Région du Sud-Ouest mercredi soir sur le campus, l'irréparable s'est plutôt produit. Ce sont des étudiants plus remontés que la veille qui sont redescendus dans la rue hier. Ils accusent notamment les forces de l'ordre de viols perpétrés sur des étudiantes et d'arrestations arbitraires au cours de l'expédition punitive conduite mercredi après-midi dans une vingtaine de mini-cités aux alentours du campus. Une folle journée ponctuée par des casses et pillages dans le

campus et en dehors. Mercredi soir, le gouverneur a annoncé la prise en charge des soins de la vingtaine d'étudiants blessés lors des affrontements avec les forces de l'ordre.

Un communiqué du gouverneur de la Région du Sud-ouest, Thomas Edjake Mbonda, lu hier, jeudi 28 avril, en début de soirée sur les antennes des radios locales, même s'il est resté muet sur la mort des trois étudiants, a confirmé la situation d'exception dans laquelle se trouve désormais placée cette université. Le gouverneur a invité les parents à éloigner leurs enfants de Molyko, le quartier qui abrite le campus et l'essentiel des mini-cités qui hébergent les étudiants. En d'autres termes les cours sont suspendus à l'université de Buéa. Criant leur détermination à venger leurs camarades, les étudiants n'arrêtent pas d'enflammer les roues et de jeter des blocs de pierre au lieu-dit "Malingo Junction", paralysant de ce fait la circulation dans la ville de Buéa qui compte une artère principale.

Thomas Edjake Mbonda accuse réception du mémorandum rédigé par les étudiants et dont la principale exigence est la suppression des droits universitaires qui montent à 50.000F. Le gouverneur, dans son communiqué, a invité les étudiants à attendre le retour de leur recteur, Dorothy Njeuma, actuellement en Afrique du Sud pour l'ouverture du prochain round des négociations.

Comments

The sight of gun-brandishing policemen in student residential areas posted on this page is ugly indeed. These strike actions are surely the result of lack of dialogue. I have not attended a Cameroonian university, or UB for that matter, but I am familiar with the attitude of public servants towards the citizens. Recently I made a visit to Cameroon after an absence of ten years, and in the course of my stay, I made a stop at a state prosecutor's office to inquire about a court case that has been delayed for more than a year. After a long wait imposed on me by the receptionist, I finally made it to the boss's office. The guy would not take off his eyes from the document he chose to read at the time. I stood before him for about two minutes, during which I appeared invisible to him. When he finally decided to acknowledge my presence, his question was "What do you want?" Not the polite "What can I do for you?" that one would expect from a servant of the people. When I told him that there was a case in his office that has been overdue for a court

date, he told me to write a complaint about it and leave it. I figured the complaint petition would also be delayed in his file and warrant a follow through; I left. I knew he was stalling, and that left a bitter taste in my mouth. That kind of attitude frustrates everyone, and if you have to go through it every time you need something done, I can't imagine what emotions it may arouse. Public servants need to know that they are there to serve the people, and not to lord it over them. The UB administrative staff should keep that in mind. That said, students must know that university education is not cheap. Considering their cost (less than 100,000 FCFA) and bearing in mind that most of them have that money paid for them by parents and relatives, I'd say they have a pretty good deal. Most students I know here in the US have to do menial jobs and take loans to pay for their education, and by the time they are through, they have to repay those debts. I am saying this out of experience. Destruction of university property will only deprive the students of proper facilities. There should be dialogue and open debates between the administration and student representatives. I for one have high hopes for UB and would not want to see it destroyed.

Posted by: [FA Epie](#) | April 28, 2005 01:16 PM

Freedom is God's gift to Humanity. Students of UB use it and sure you would be free. As a warning, revolutions start in colleges. Surely a revolution is starting in Cameroon. People graduate and cannot find jobs. That is not fair. Mr. Biya it is time to implement your Grand Ambitions as you call it.

Posted by: [asah](#) | April 28, 2005 04:17 PM

Hi dear brother JP Tayong, please don't bring confusion on what is now happening in Buea. It is not a matter of as you wrote "la Republique du Cameroun" but a matter of our system! It seems you ignore that all this began in Yaoundé. In case you also ignore it most of their leaders there are from the Centre Region! So we Cameroonians all have problems and all our problems are because of the system though they might be different one to the others. Just to inform you in case you do not know it, we all want change, Francophones and Anglophones, Bamiléké and Ewondos, Bakwérés and Haoussas... so from east to west, north to south. Please do not just take these

problems in Buea (which began in Yaoundé) as a Southern Cameroons' one! Wish you all the best my brother.

Posted by: [JP](#) | April 28, 2005 04:33 PM

You bring your bankruptcy of ideas, your corrupt understanding of history and facts to attempt what argument? “Anglophone” does not equal Bakweri anymore than francophone equals Bamileke or Beti. The problem with the failure of the Federation is because France made a decision to add Southern Cameroons to her colony La Republique du Cameroun (Charles De Gaulle said we became, including you and your mum and dad, a gift to France from the Queen of England!). The instruments used were the Vichy-type fascists that they placed all over francophone capitals in Africa.

Sir, anything, whether it starts in Yaoundé or Buea that give the Vichy-type junta in Yaoundé cause for less sleep is welcomed. The case of the Southern Cameroons is one of one State against a colonizing State, FRANCE, through her colony La Republique du Cameroun. The instrumentalisation of tribalism which you miserably attempt to interject, and that evil France uses in her colonies does not hold muster with us. The Yaoundé junta must be destroyed. If it starts through Ngoa Ekelle via Molyko, I will cheer. Or if Chirac wakes up tomorrow and decides to change his Nazi-like policies in Africa, which too will work for me, but that system has to go. In the process the Southern Cameroons, not part of La Republique du Cameroun when that place became “independent” of Premiere Janvier 1960 will go back and respect their international borders and let us leave in peace!

Posted by: [Blasius Ekange](#) | April 28, 2005 05:11 PM

Blasius's comments are very much welcomed, accepted and acknowledged by all Southern Cameroon. The values of our society have been destroyed by the Vichy type regime installed in Yaoundé. Corruption, deceit, tribalism, nepotism. The product of all this, strikes, economic failures, etc.; whatever is happening in Buea even if it started in Buea is a product of the Vichy regime in France.

Posted by: [Rexon](#) | April 29, 2005 04:43 AM

Before starting, I would like to thank the brave students who are giving us this information. One has to appreciate the risk they are taking in doing this. What is happening is an outrage. A university environment is not just about getting your degree. It is a place that moulds you, that shapes you hence it is not an environment of rigid conformity. Students have got the right to demonstrate on whatever agenda comes on their mind and the rector is, to a degree, answerable to them. I do not know the kind of heavy handed methods the Police are using but it seems as if these were not the same used in Yaoundé. Are there double standards at work here?

I can only express my condolences to the bereaved families and pray that they see justice. I sincerely hope that those who died did not die for nothing. That would be the greatest tragedy.

Posted by: [N. T. Chamfor](#) | April 29, 2005 04:21 AM

Stop blaming the University administration. It is sad that two students have been killed and I express my condolence to the bereaved families. Again this strike is uncalled for. This is purely academic issue and not political. If students had grievances they would have tabled it in a polite manner either in writings or peaceful demonstration. They should not have waited for university of Yaoundé to go on strike before they begin. Please students enough damage has been done. Listen to us because we have been students and have been in strikes. There is no genuine reason for you to be on strike. The lecturers who are poorly paid are supposed to go on strike and not you. When you go out destroying University property who do you expect to suffer? Njeuma, Endeley, Ngoh and the rest have got their PhDs and are almost going to retirement. They have nothing to lose. Please stop being foolish. It was a mistake that you joined Yao students. Can you please follow them and call off the strike. If you do not listen to my advice you will be a scapegoat. Remember that the mistakes you will make today will never be repaired. Ask those who went on genuine strikes the price they are paying. And for those matured comrades taking part in this forum I believe from experience you can use your common sense and advise these students rather than inciting the crisis. If students wanted to lead the nation into strike they would have done this when prices of fuel and other commodities went up. There are many things students can demonstrate for change in the country like better health care, transport system, employment, just to name a few. Go

back to school before you end up being dropouts and follow your so-called brothers abroad to serve as slaves in factories. A word to a wise is sufficient.

Posted by: [Samuel Batumbu](#) | April 29, 2005 10:09 AM

This is a golden opportunity for students to make themselves heard. But they should be careful not to be used by the administration and staff as tools for self-promotion. Njeuma administration is too bureaucratic to be called an Anglo-Saxon university. UB students note that this government is known for making promises and not fulfilling them. I believe this is what will happen, promises will be made and nothing will be done. Two years ago when I was in UB and we had a wave of armed robberies and rapes by thieves, we went on strike causing panic in Buea. Nzegge Onyong Charles (RIP) the then governor came out and said all our problems will be solved but today the situation is the same. Fight on students. Insist on the fact that ALL LEVEL 400 courses be offered during the re-sit.

Ntchanang Mpafe, UB ALUMNI

Posted by: [Ntchanang Mpafe](#) | April 29, 2005 10:39 AM

Dear reader, I will like to start by thanking *The Post* for giving this exclusive interactive feature on her site and her extensive coverage of the UB saga. A spectator (one who hasn't studied or experienced the conditions of study in UB) will think most of the writers condemning the police, government or university authorities are overreacting. But to tell you the truth whether you believe it or not, a supporter of the La Republique regime or not, all these opinions expressed are deserved.

As an insider I can tell you that Njeuma's tenure as chancellor is long overdue. She has run out of ideas and reforms and her clique of CPDM bigwigs and bunch of tribalists she has surrounded herself with at the central administration can do her no good. The only thing that keeps her going to tell you the truth is her membership in the CPDM political bureau. I hope when she comes back from her safari trip to the states she will be able to pick up the mess she has caused: massacre of two promising Cameroonians, control the blood thirsty policemen looting and intimidating students and finally do for the UB family one good, RESIGN or better still retire. As for

Paul Biya and his stooges, they should reflect if this is the type of condition under which they studied in the West as students.

Posted by: [Ambay](#) | April 29, 2005 11:51 AM

Why all the hell on Mme Njeuma. It seems some of us do not even try to read what The Post has been writing. Mme Njeuma is not even in the country at the moment. She is in South Africa as explained by the Governor to the striking students and will be back by Monday 1st. Meanwhile Njanjo Endeley even begged them and at the first instance asked the Police that their Presence wasn't needed on campus as this might even aggravate issues. It was only after the students went out of the confines of the university that they clashed with the Police and things went haywire. I remember the first ever strike when Akwanga was the student union leader. He was called in several occasions for a negotiation with the authorities, but he preferred that anything they wanted to say should be said in front of all the students and instead led them to more havoc. What are the consequences on him today? When the registrar who in an attempt to talk to the students in their gathering decided to hush him away and not to listen to any of the school authorities, then to whom were they to transmit their grievances? The students were just acting blindly and I am sure the whole university community and Buea as a whole is confused because there was no apparent tension built up within and out of campus to have instigated the strike action by the students. Everybody is talking about bureaucracy but tell me where fraud supersedes competence, the university must take action to avoid these fraudsters from operating. The authorities are doing everything to decongest offices such that shy students who cannot discuss their problems with lecturers could do so and the situation is improving.

One Israel Ambe is saying that UB conducts practicals in Lycee Labs. This is totally untrue. I think this happened only for the first second and third batches after that all practicals have been conducted on campus. Please stop painting a picture of something you don't know. Everybody who has been in universities with defined boundaries like UB knows that in an event of a strike, if peaceful they are safe and secure on campus as police men will never be invited in but may be stationed out of the confines in an event of wanton destruction before they can be called in but when the strike is carried to the public, it becomes something different, as students can no longer be

separated from vandals and thieves in town, and if peace and order has to reign the outcome is usually catastrophic. Please stop and go home until the authorities deem the environment safe for lectures to continue.

Posted by: [Fred N.](#) | April 29, 2005 01:21 PM

For God's sake why bullets would be used on human beings in the absence of war? Well may the souls of our fellow Cameroonian students rest in peace, but I would like to find out the following. In response to the shooting of students by police officers trained to maintain peace in their own way. The minister of higher education responded by saying the students were shot out of the University environment. Where in a University town are policemen allowed to shoot innocent students who were in their own way expressing their grudges. It might not have been the most appropriate way for the students to act but even in the United States, the most democratic country as they say, a good number of demonstrations have been seen here and there for rights. Those who oppose war, those who strike for salary increments and even in Brussels recently, those who marched to the U.S. embassy recently in protest against the coming of the president of the United States to Europe. I wouldn't like it politicised otherwise it would become a marginalisation issue but the police officers who did these acts should be brought to order. I understand the delegate general for national security has heard this and a few weeks ago, he sacked a commissioner of police for shooting a taxi driver to dead. But indeed too much has been [going on with] the University of Buea and the entire higher education area in Cameroon. Imagine the Minister of Higher Education only disbursing money for the Universities (Yaoundé I and Buea) following a strike. It thus implies if the students didn't use this means to express their grievances then there shouldn't have been reactions. I remember one reporter once in the CRTV said "a country that only reacts to situations rather than taking its responsibilities."

As for the University of Buea, my friend Barom mentioned that Ambe complained of UB taking practicals in Lyceé labs. Well it has been history but what about the students of the faculty of health science who are sent to Yaoundé for whether they call it stage or internship for one academic year by the University but instead on the account of the students who has their own school in Buea?

What of the case of student academic records whereby a student will have to pay a thousand francs CFA (1000FCFA) for his own report card? This take at least a month to process.... Not to talk of when the registrar is on holiday and without any assistant, this will take 2 months for 3 sheets of A4 papers to be printed from the data base and signed. This has rendered many young Cameroonians hopeless as they have missed several deadlines in other institutions.

The registrar in his interview with the post complained of students paying “ONLY A REGISTRATION FEE”. I would like to find out how much the registrar himself paid when he was in school and compares the situation with the United States where thousands of dollars are paid for tuition. Mr. Registrar or whatever you would prefer to be called, what is the salary of a civil servant in Cameroon compared to that of one in the U.S.; what are the possibilities of part time jobs, what are the possibilities of student jobs and how many scholarship opportunities and waivers do you have.

In Belgium, the fees to the University of Gent is 80 Euros. This is a day’s job in Belgium and of course a negligible sum. Why didn’t you compare the situation with Belgium? I think it is high time you start thinking of when you were young, when you will get old and maybe when you die and the lives of your own children. Those students too will one day be like you.

Thierry Ayoye, België

Posted by: [Thierry](#) | April 29, 2005 02:58 PM

I think the problem in Cameroon is leadership. The selection process at all levels is questionable. No amount of training will change the police corps in particular. What do you expect from a group of people who were handpicked to occupy places which were meant for more qualified Cameroonians? May God have Mercy.

Posted by: [Cameroonian](#) | April 29, 2005 03:15 PM

People should not get very emotional and hijack the student crisis in Buea for their own personal agendas. The students did not go about their strikes in an organized manner, and the police did not go about quelling the strike appropriately. Two students are dead. May their souls rest in peace. We

should have a good post mortem analysis of this situation to see how the students can bring up their problems in a civil manner and how the police can react to student unrest without causing harm to anybody. If anything Desmond Tutu and Nelson Mandela taught us the power of non-violent confrontation. It brought down apartheid.

Posted by: [Nchong](#) | April 29, 2005 04:59 PM

Mr. Nchong, who told u that apartheid, was a nonviolent confrontation? Read your books well before commenting on things you don't know. Violence has solved many problems around the world.

Posted by: [Pet](#) | April 30, 2005 07:45 AM

God where are you. Look with favour on your people suffering here in Cameroon. Rise up for us God fearing leaders who will lead us and our nation to the paths of Justice, Peace and Prosperity.

Posted by: [Samuel Ojoro](#) | May 1, 2005 01:59 PM

Varsity Strike: How Police Tortured, Looted and Raped In Buea

By Pegue Manga

When the morning sun streaked across the rooms of student hostels in Molyko, Buea, on Saturday, April 30, it did not betoken hope. Rather, it was an illumination to permit the few courageous students who had stayed on in the face of police brutality to evaluate the degree of destruction carried out by the police in their two-day raids on their hostels, April 27 and 28. Thousands of students had fled their hostels in fear of continuous police cruelty. The police had beaten them, ransacked their rooms and stolen their money, TV sets and mobile phones.

Casualties

The students had even taken casualties. Gilbert Nforlem, a Master's Degree Zoology student and Aloysius Abuoam, Faculty of Education,

Department of Biology are both lying in the Buea District Hospital Mortuary. The police shot Nforlem on his chest while Abuoam was shot on the head from behind, on Thursday, April 28. The gory sight of the victims fuelled tempers as the population emptied onto the Buea double carriageway, blocked the road and burnt tyres. It took extra efforts by the police and further brutality to clear the debris.

Testimonies

The police left on the track broken doors and windows, toilet bowls, gas cookers and TV sets. They fleeced huge sums of money from their victims and asked some of them to roll in the mud.

Perfecto Marshal Nguema Avomo is an Equato Guinean residing in Happi Cam hostel. A student of Pan African Institute for Development, West Africa, PAID WA, Perfecto was not in when the police attacked the hostel. They smashed 30 different doors and took away Perfecto's TV set, destroyed his toilet bowl and turned on his gas cooker.

"They destroyed my rubbing oil and smashed my window," he said. He showed your correspondent the room, which he said is occupied by a soldier who works in Douala. They came when the soldier too was away. The police turned everything inside out. They also destroyed a room whose occupant had died. "This is wickedness," Perfecto said. "The police in Cameroon are the same as those of Equatorial Guinea. They exert brutality even on the weak." Perfecto said the Equatorial Guinean Consul General took all his compatriots, who reside in the same hostel, to Douala. But for Perfecto's, 39 out of the 40 rooms in the hostel have been deserted.

Trinity Hostel suffered the heaviest losses. Three of the tenants, Solange Sactor, Emmaculate Tata and Christelle Ladjinon, were hospitalised at the time of this report. The students have abandoned the 73 rooms in the hostel. The police soaked the students' mattresses in water and poured soup on some of them.

Drawing Blood

19-year-old Josephine Sinda Tumnde is now taking refuge in a family friend's home in Sandpit, Great Soppo. The police attacked her in her New Castle hostel on April 28. "I was in my room preparing food when I heard a

violent knock on my door. Three policemen entered my room and I ran into the bathroom,” Tumnde explained. The police asked Tumnde to lie prostrate but “before I could lie down, they had started beating me with truncheons and sticks as if I was a dangerous snake. They shattered my water closet and toilet bowl into pieces,” she said.

As Tumnde sat crying, bleeding profusely, the policemen fell on her again, kicking and punching her. They frogmarched her out of the house, oblivious to the pleas of the landlord. The police shattered the screen of a TV set in Tumnde’s room and overturned everything in the room.” As the police left, I could not get up from where I sat due to excruciating pains from the wound on one of my fingers. Blood was oozing from my right ankle and left shin. I saw demons for the first time in my life and that incident has given me nightmares for four days now,” Tumnde told *The Post*.

Search for Money, Mobile Phones

Divine Njum is a businessman who runs a documentation centre on the University Street. He was returning from the road on April 27, when the police ordered him to stop. “I obliged. They took me to a muddy place and drenched me in mud. There were about 17 of them,” Njum told *The Post* on April 30. “They took my mobile phone and FCFA 10,000,” he said. Though Njum feels insecure, he has no choice but to stay on, because “this is my business place and I live here.”

Marceline Ngong runs a mobile telephone booth. She was attacked at 5:00 pm on April 27. “The police destroyed the door of our house and beat us up. They accused me of being one of the students who have been throwing stones at the police. They rubbed me in mud.”

According to Marceline, the police attempted to take her to their van but some boys started throwing stones at them, causing the cops to flee. The police seized Marceline’s Samsung phone and FCFA 15,000 she had on her. “I am now using my colleague’s mobile phone. I will quit this house once my rents expire,” she declared.

A student at Monte Carlo hostel, who preferred not to be named, said the police chased some students into the hostel. She said they broke the toilet door and fished her out of her hiding place. “They took us outside and beat us. I showed them my husband’s picture. Then they said they would spare me because I am their colleague’s wife.” But the police did not stop there.

“They said I would have to give them some money. One of them opened my purse and found just FCFA 800 inside. He said you claim you are our colleague’s wife, yet you cannot give us money. So he turned around and broke my mirror,” the victim recounted.

Estelle Kain, a level 200 student, was reading a novel when the police raided her neighbourhood. They pulled her out of her bathroom and flogged her. “Seven of them came in and called me a prostitute. They got me out and beat me. Kain’s neighbours lost two mobile phones while his sister was battered into insensibility. “One of them tried to hit me with the gun, but my finger was on the trigger,” he said.

The Lecturer and the Old Woman

Even University lecturers were not spared. Emmanuel Yenshu, Head of the Sociology Department, was arrested and molested. The police ordered him to pick up the stones the students had used to block the road. Yenshu adjusted his glasses and did just what the police had asked him to do.

Mrs. Rodrine Ngeton was plaiting her hair when the police swooped on the saloon. The police began molesting Ngeton’s daughter and one of her friends who were plaiting her hair. She was incensed and protested immediately. But the police fell on her and inflicted a deep wound on her head. She was dragged to the Molyko Police Post and released later. When Mrs. Ngeton showed her wounds to Southwest Governor, Thomas Ejake Mbonda, the administrator reportedly asked her if he was a hospital.

Still Talking Tough

The Post spoke to one of the student leaders on Thursday, April 28. He said they would intensify the strike until the government resolves all their grievances. “All we have as arms are the stones you see around. We are unarmed, but the police were so brutal. They beat up even girls.” Though he admitted that the strike lacked proper coordination, the leader, however, maintained that they were not losing the battle. “We are winning. As you can see, we have blocked traffic. We are, by so doing, raising public awareness. We are calling on the public to join us.” He said the financial situation in UB is bleak. He said the University has not been able to disburse money to pay students preparing for the upcoming University games.

He regretted the absence of Buea Mayor, Charles Mbella Moki, whom he said would have used his suave tongue and tact to dialogue with the students. “Had it been he was around, things would not have degenerated to this extent. Can you imagine the police carrying live bullets in a student demonstration, and the Governor says nothing,” he growled.

Njeuma’s Arrival

The strike action took place in the absence of the Vice Chancellor of the University of Buea, Dr. Mrs. Dorothy Limunga Njeuma. She however returned on Friday, April 29 and visited the corpses of her students in the mortuary. Njeuma is said to have convened a meeting with the students for Tuesday, May 3.

May 03, 2005 at 12:39 PM in [Special Report: The University of Buea Crisis](#) | [Permalink](#)

Comments

This kind of behaviour in Cameroon is very strange these days. I thought this happened in the 80s because civilization had not gone too far. How can armed policemen direct live bullets towards protesting students, even if the reason for their strike action is (was) wrong. Now talking about deaths of students, can anyone bring these two innocent students back to life? Students who are standing for their rights? Policemen who have never seen the walls of class 7 in primary school, trained armed robbers, looting in students’ residential areas, raping girls in broad daylight, carrying mobile phones and money away. Thieves or policemen? The word “police” has lost all its value in Cameroon. What a country. Are we safe? It is really a nightmare to anyone who happened to be in Buea. The earlier this country changes, the better for all. Not strange to think that the loose bullets must have been from the gun(s) of some illiterate French fools that call themselves forces of law and order too. What law? What order? Cameroon will never change if things remain the way they are. They should learn from their neighbours. People have rights but in Cameroon, even students have no rights. The youth of today are the leaders of tomorrow they say. Na lie. How can the youth of today try to better themselves for leadership tomorrow and end up in

mortuaries, bruised and battered like animals? Animals are even treated with respect. It's a shame Cameroonians. I'm ASHAMED to call myself a Cameroonian. That name is a bad omen everywhere one goes. The corruption world cup has come to stay in Cameroon. This is no country. There is no administration in Cameroon. It's a pity to say the "head of government" is from this place where students were tortured for their rights. Head of government my foot! Cameroonians, open your eyes. The handwriting is on the wall. My heartfelt condolences to the families that have toiled to see their children succeed in future just to watch their dreams shattered at the end because of the irresponsible act of a trained domestic homo sapiens in uniform.

Posted by: [Romarki](#) | May 4, 2005 02:04 AM

Sometimes reading some of these comments really makes me sick. What has "Bakweri strength or lack of it or Head of Government coming from the place of the strike" got to do with the issues at stake? We should try and avoid our idiosyncrasies or personal biases when we comment on very serious national issues like these. We look for every opportunity to express the regrettable "North West and South West Divide". This is sad, indeed. Little wonder therefore that our focus has suddenly drifted from the students' genuine demands to "Njeuma and Endeley must go". What of "Titanji and Chia Must Go"? Yes, the police did a wrong thing to murder (or execute if you prefer) students, but we are not doing a right thing to be parochial in our thoughts either – are we? I would rather we don't write a thing if it must be empty and in pidgin. There are great minds who read this page and would love to contribute, but can't do it until some guys starting getting serious.

Have we thought about the effects of developing a "Strike culture" in replacing our University leaders? It will go on and on and will hardly stop. Remember, a habit is easy to form but hard to stop. Back to the main issue, I think Cameroon will be better off without the police. We already have security agencies like Shepherd Security (if my memory reads well) doing a wonderful job back home. The Francophones can keep them (police) since they understand them. But, we (Anglophones) don't.

May the souls of our two murdered brothers rest in perfect peace with the Lord. They have now become National heroes touching the heart of the

Head of State in a relatively short time (like no other person ever did) that he has allocated within very few days the sum of 4 949 935 000 FCFA to solve students' problems. Guys, you died (like a saviour) so that all other students would have a better University life. Thank God you are Anglophones. We are the ones who keep fixing and paying the price for that rotten-corrupt country and God is seeing. Your names have been written in the annals of Cameroon Higher Education history.

But, why can't this government be proactive (as opposed to reactive) in solving the nation's problems? This is another ball game. I may come back to it, when people start writing serious and helpful comments on this page.

Posted by: [Concerned reader](#) | May 4, 2005 08:40 AM

Dear Mr. or Mrs. Concerned Reader,

It is really unfortunate you didn't disclose your identity so that I can know how best to address you. You are right in castigating the first writer for singling out the Bakweri, Head of Government or the Paramount Chief as this only goes to weaken our front against those who are marginalising us. But I can equally understand the writer's disgust with the fact that the people of the Buea locality failed to join in the show of opposition to the general suffering of Cameroonians. He or she must be quite used to the unified manner in which people of the North West react to issues that might affect only a small section of the population. But as I said let statements like this not come to divide us at a moment like this when we need each other. Abraham Lincoln frames it best that "A house divided against itself cannot stand."

Posted by: [Ambe Isy](#) | May 4, 2005 09:35 AM

I don't see why many people are so surprised with the way the police reacted. What do you expect from a bunch of morons, who may not even know how to read? Let the government of Cameroon try by all possible means to teach police people aspects of human rights. Yes, Bakweri people only know how to say oye, oye, oyeyeyeye when they see chop. Too bad... too bad for the blood of innocent students to be spilled on their land. This is a curse. I will not be surprised if a motion of support will be addressed to Lion man in the weeks to come. Njeuma should know that her reign will

soon be over, and she will have to give an account. She runs the place like a cocoa plantation, and she thinks she is on top of the world. Njeuma you have failed.

Posted by: [Ndumu Oliver](#) | May 4, 2005 12:57 PM

Please lay off tribalising everything here. The native peoples of Buea are no more or less victims of the Vichy-type Cameroonian system than those of Victoria, Mamfe, Kumba, Bamenda or Nkambe. These stereotypes you propagate are exactly the types of stereotypes that La Republique's owner FRANCE has encouraged in Africa, so that as "tribes" fight, they loot. Let us all be above this. Especially the peoples of the Southern Cameroons who when they governed themselves never resorted to have forces of law and order murder their citizens. This evil occurrence is common all over FranceAfrique and must be removed from the soil of the Southern Cameroons.

Posted by: [Blasius Ekange](#) | May 4, 2005 01:29 PM

I am outraged with the kind of comments made by some of my brothers who have devoted their time to participate on this forum. In fact I don't know if it is childishness or it is some kind of madness for them to think that they can avenge their frustration and grievances at their Bakweri host landlords. For Christ sake, why all these anti sentiments against the Bakweri tribe? Has it been established that those policemen who opened fire on two innocent students are of Bakweri extraction? Or the said Governor Ejake Mbonda who personally supervised the torture of UB students is a Bakwerian?

Posted by: [Another concerned reader](#) | May 4, 2005 02:27 PM

It's about [time] these brutes who call themselves law enforcers were whipped into shape. It is not enough for them to say they were fishing out rioters because clearly they caused more damage than the rioters themselves. The administration of the republic has got to see to it that some drastic changes are made within its bureaucracy and branches especially that of the

police force. These creeps need to be reprimanded for what they have done and cut off from the force.

Posted by: [Anonymous](#) | May 4, 2005 04:15 PM

My dear compatriots,

We should not belittle the purpose of the strike by the university students and the loss of those who were massacred by the system's oppressive forces. They should not be betrayed through divisive writings. The purpose of the strike was far-reaching and echoed the frustration of a generation who are in the transition into society as future leaders of our potential great country. Those who participated in the strike did not do so to seek or protect tribal, ethnic, regional or religious interests. The patriotic students came from the broad spectrum of the Kamerunian population.

The memories of those who died should be held highly, while at the same time we should not close our eyes to the fact that students were victimized by the men in uniform indiscriminately, irrespective of their origins. And those who were on the side of the regime in power happen to come from all corners in Kamerun. That is the reality. Instead we should join hands and ensure that these scoundrels never get away with the murders and carnage.

Posted by: [Janvier Tchouteu](#) | May 4, 2005 05:27 PM

LUNDI, 09 MAI, 2005 - 06:09

Société : Buéa : Un véhicule de la police incendié

La mise en bière de la dépouille de Gilbert Nforlem a donné lieu à une remobilisation des étudiants.

L. N., à Buéa

Au moins 5000 étudiants de l'Université de Buéa ont tenu à rendre un ultime hommage à leur camarade Gilbert Nforlem Forbi jeudi, 05 mai dernier. Dans une ambiance tendue où les effectifs de la police et de la gendarmerie autour de l'hôpital étaient impressionnants, les étudiants ont chanté et prié pour "le repos de l'âme de cet autre martyr de l'université du Cameroun". Ce jour de la commémoration de l'ascension du Christ a été

choisi par les autorités civiles et militaires du Sud-Ouest qui ont entièrement pris en charge l'organisation des obsèques, pour procéder à la levée du corps de l'une des premières victimes de la grève, tombée sous les coups de feu tirés par les éléments du Groupement mobile d'intervention (Gmi) de Buéa. Malgré les manœuvres du gouverneur, Thomas Edjaké Mbonda, visant à tenir les étudiants à l'écart de cette cérémonie, les camarades du défunt, informés par le téléphone arabe, ont répondu présent.

Selon de nombreux témoignages recueillis à Buéa, les étudiants ont rendu exigüe par leur présence massive, la morgue de l'hôpital du district de santé de Buéa. De manière spontanée, les camarades de cet ancien étudiant de Master de zoologie, ont organisé une haie d'honneur en hommage à Gilbert Nforlem. De même, ils ont entrepris d'escorter le corbillard jusqu'à la sortie de la ville. C'est au carrefour baptisé "Bongo Square" que la police a donné la charge contre la foule. Une attitude considérée par les étudiants comme de la "provocation". De l'avis de nombreux témoins, c'est "le gouverneur qui a donné l'ordre de repousser les étudiants pour permettre aux proches du défunt de poursuivre seuls le trajet de Bamenda, dans la Région du Nord-Ouest où Nforlem doit être mis en terre".

Face à l'hostilité des étudiants, les forces de police ont déployé des matraques et des grenades lacrymogènes. Ce à quoi les étudiants ont répondu par des jets de projectiles. Et les étudiants ne sont pas allés de mains mortes, puisqu'ils sont allés plus loin dans leur réplique, en incendiant un véhicule de la police avant de battre en retraite. Toute la journée de vendredi, 06 mai, la tension est restée vive dans une ville quadrillée par la police et la gendarmerie où toutes les entrées étaient rigoureusement filtrées. L'ambiance était déjà très lourde la veille et les jours qui ont précédé cette mise en bière. Lors des différentes réunions préparatoires des obsèques de Gilbert Nforlem, le gouverneur a refusé qu'il soit organisé une veillée sans corps comme le souhaitent les camarades du disparu. Dans l'enceinte de l'université, toujours fermée, la police s'impose comme son nouveau locataire. Il est surtout difficile de parler à inconnu dans cette ville où les mini-cités se sont vidées de leurs occupants.

Gendarmes, UB Students Battle over Slain Comrade's Corpse

By Pegue Manga

Buea University Students clashed with gendarmes on Thursday, May 5, during the removal of the corpse of one of their mates, Gilbert Nforlem, shot dead by a policeman on Thursday, April 28. The students had insisted on escorting the remains of Nforlem, which were removed from the Buea



Students fleeing from gendarmerie water canon

District Hospital mortuary, as far as Mile 17, en route to Bamenda, but the local administration was opposed to it. It was hinted that the students would be stopped at the Buea Independence Square (Bongo Square). A squadron of gun-toting gendarmes were deployed and a National Gendarmerie water canon truck was on stand-by at the Bongo Square.

The students were undeterred. They marched on, all dressed in black. As the cortege approached Bongo Square, the administration, headed by Southwest Governor, Thomas Ejake Mbonda, who had left the mortuary and taken up position at the Bongo Square grand stand, ordered for two buses carrying mourners to go ahead.

The water canon began to close in, while policemen, who had been called in to ensure security, took up position, some 100 metres in front of the

students who numbered about 2000. The students had been helmed in. Tension mounted. The students besieged the hearse transporting the corpse. The canon unleashed the water.

Will Government Settle Riot Deaths, Destruction?

The students initially stood their ground, and then took off. The hearse, escorted by a gendarmerie pick up sped off. The students rained stones on the water cannon. Pandemonium set in. As the canon was spraying along, the students ran after it. They blocked the road around, using the yet to be erected lampposts placed on the ridge of the double carriageway. Stones, kiosks and tables were used to block the road.

Blackout

As the students made their way towards Molyko, they burnt tyres and the lampposts lying on the ridge in the middle of the highway. Huge stones were used to block the road. The police confronted them when they got to Malingo Junction. They used teargas to disperse them. The students then ordered everyone living along the Buea main roads to switch off their lights. The entire stretch of the main road from Molyko up to Clerk's Quarters was engulfed by darkness and remained in the clutches of fear. Traffic rolled to a standstill. As the demonstration gathered momentum, a police jeep was set ablaze at Mile 17, Buea. The mob, which had earlier attacked a Brasseries truck, was hinted that a police Suzuki Jeep had been hidden behind Jeannot Travel Agency. The jeep was carried to the road and set ablaze

Deceased's Father Weeps

Speaking to The Post at the Mortuary, late Gilbert Nforlem's father, Pa Nforlem said his son was a good boy. "Gilbert was a very good, honest and hardworking boy, who followed all instructions. I have educated this boy from class one to master's degree level only for him to be killed by the police," Pa Nforlem, who is 61-years-old wept. "It really pains my heart. I feel as to die, because he is the one to support his brothers but they have killed him. Now that I am old, who will support his brothers?" the old man asked, raising his arms towards the sky.

Pa Nforlem said he went to the Governor's office and asked him who will cater for his children, now that Gilbert was dead and he was told to wait after the burial. "Maybe he has sent me away, because these people tell a lot of lies." He said Governor Ejake told him he did not know who shot Gilbert. Pa Nforlem revealed that the state is taking charge of the corpse. Pa Nforlem said Gilbert would be buried on Friday, May 6 at 2:00 pm in Mberewa Quarters, Nkwen, Bamenda.

Emergency Meeting

Earlier on Tuesday, May 3, the Vice Chancellor of the University of Buea, Dr. Mrs. Dorothy Limunga Njeuma, chaired a meeting of administrative staff and lecturers. At the meeting it was resolved that classes could only resume in the University after May 20. Njeuma reportedly told the meeting that she learnt of the strike in UB while she was on her way to Rwanda from South Africa. She reportedly said she called the Prime Minister and the Minister of Higher Education and suggested that the school be closed down. But the authorities had earlier announced that classes would resume on April 28. Prof. Emmanuel Chia, Deputy Vice Chancellor, explained why. He said it was a collegiate decision that had the blessing of the Minister of Higher Education. Some lecturers said there was bad blood in the house. They said lecturers have embarked on a campaign to run down their colleagues.

Dr. Akam of the Chemistry Department alleged that students of the Faculty of Social and Management Sciences started the strike. The students were said to have gone to AMPHI 750 and ordered a lecturer, John Teke, to get out. But Prof. Cornelius Lambi pointed out that some students carried placards stating that Akam must go. This presupposes that the students came from the Science Faculty. A six-point resolution was arrived at the end of the meeting. The meeting condemned the police for using live bullets on the students. The decision of the students to take the strike to the streets was also condemned.

Lecturers were urged to rethink their position. Participants wondered why students had to come out to challenge their lecturers. It was resolved that students' caution fees (FCFA 10,000) will be used to take care of the destruction on campus. Families of the slain students were asked to contact the university authorities.

Njeuma Rants

Meanwhile, when *The Post* attempted to talk to Dr. Njeuma by phone, she invited your correspondent to her home. When this reporter arrived at Njeuma's Governor's Street residence, the Vice Chancellor accused this newspaper of trying to destroy the University. "Your newspaper and you in particular (she pointed at your correspondent) are trying to destroy the University of Buea."

Njeuma pointed out that *The Post* has not said anything about the University property that had been destroyed, though in its Friday, April 29 report, The Post presented the damages inflicted on the University by the students earlier on April 27. "You only carried pictures of police brutalising students," she fumed.

The Vice Chancellor remarked that she will pass away but the University will stay on, so *The Post* should not think it is destroying her. Njeuma said it was an insult for the Editor in Chief of *The Post* to sit in his office and send your correspondent to come and interview her. "Go and tell your Editor-in-Chief that if he wants an interview, he should meet me in my office tomorrow. I will not talk to you," she said.

May 06, 2005 at 03:49 PM in [Special Report: The University of Buea Crisis](#) | [Permalink](#) | [Comments \(7\)](#) | [TrackBack](#)

Comments

It is true that when a magistrate dies, honourable members of the bench offer their fallen brother a befitting burial. It is equally true that when a lawyer dies, his funeral ground is saturated with people, Barons, LJ's, Masters of the Rose, etc. in their wigs and legal regalia. It is indeed a stinking truism that when an Army [man] dies in a war front, like a mother mourns for her children, his colleagues are the masters of ceremony. Not even the family members can influence their arrangement. That was all the students of the University of Buea demanded for one of their fallen brothers, on Thursday the 5th of May 2005. They saw him die. He died in their arms. Marching in a convoy from the mortuary to Mile 17 was the only befitting respect they could offer. The Government won't allow it.

God made two things as judges of human actions, conscience and history. If the consciences of those who killed those guys, and refused the students from giving them the respect they are due, then history and posterity will never forgive them. May God bless the University of Buea.

Uche Eze Nkatta Idika, Department of Political Science, University of Buea

Posted by: [Uche Eze Nkatta Idika](#) | May 6, 2005 04:20 PM

Amazing isn't it, that the only thing the Vice Chancellor has to say is to pour blame on the Post... Some things just do not make sense to me... But then again, what more do you expect of people like her who only exist to better their own lives, rather than help others progress? I sure hope she does not get any sleep at night... Hope all she sees is the faces of two innocent human beings who were so senselessly murdered.

Posted by: [Anon](#) | May 6, 2005 04:42 PM

Cameroon leader orders inquiry into student deaths

YAOUNDE, April 29 (Reuters) - Cameroon's president has ordered an inquiry into the deaths of two students during a demonstration at a university in the southwest of the central African country, a government minister said on Friday.

The deaths came after days of demonstrations by students protesting for better living and study conditions. Independent local newspapers said the students were shot by police. Police in Buea were not immediately available to comment.

Higher Education Minister Jacques Fame Ndongo said in a statement that "two students of the University of Buea died (on Thursday) during clashes outside the campus". He said President Paul Biya had ordered a judicial inquiry.

Bouddih Adams, an editor at Buea's *the Post* newspaper, said he went to the university minutes after the boys were shot. "I went to the hospital and

the doctors confirmed to me that the boys were shot,” he told Reuters by telephone.

The students of Buea called the strike in support of a similar action by students at the University of Yaoundé, the capital of Cameroon. On Wednesday, Ndongo met students in Yaoundé and promised to try to examine some of their demands, such as providing more lecture halls and laboratories.

The University of Buea is the only English-speaking University in Cameroon, which was part of a German protectorate from 1884 and later divided into French and British ruled areas.

April 29, 2005 at 04:51 PM in [Special Report: The University of Buea Crisis](#) | [Permalink](#) | [Comments \(22\)](#) | [TrackBack](#)

Deceased Student's Mother Laments

By Francis Tim Mbom



“We have laboured in vain. A calm boy who would tread on an ant and it would not even die.” These were the anguish-laden words of Mrs. Rose Mary Lem Niba lamenting upon the death of her foster son, Gilbert Nforlem, one of the two students shot dead by the police in Buea on Thursday, April 28.

Mrs. Lem, who is Nforlem's aunt, told The Post in Limbe where she lives and works that she learnt her foster son, a post graduate student of the Department of Zoology, had barely left his room on the request of his supervisor to pick up the corrected version of his thesis and hand it in for final typing. "It was on his way back to his room in Molyko that a police officer shot him," she told The Post. She said they were expecting their son to graduate this December. As to the kind of person who the son was, she said she had never known him as one who could be behind any act of hostility or violence.

She also recounted that the friend who was with Nforlem at the time he met his death, said they were simply moving back from the supervisor's residence when the police, for no apparent reason, opened fire on them. It was at this point that the friend dashed off, after having seen Nforlem fall. She said immediately she got the news, she got in touch with Magistrate Hannah Egbe of the Limbe Magistrate Court. Magistrate Egbe in turn, got in contact with some two lawyers in Buea who rushed to the scene. Following the lawyers' intervention, she said, her son's remains were taken to the hospital in Buea for a post mortem. The hospital, she said, confirmed Nforlem died of bullet wounds.

Born in August, 1976, she said, Nforlem was the first son in a family of eight. His parents, father and mother, hailed respectively from Nkwen and Bafut in the Northwest Region. But Nforlem, she said, had lived and schooled with her all through his life.

May 03, 2005 at 11:07 AM in [Special Report: The University of Buea Crisis](#) | [Permalink](#)

Comments

I am shocked by this great lost. The treasure of a family has been buried for just a second. Where are we heading to? It is a pity that our president, members of government have no pity for the common man. For how long would this continue? The days have gone when technocrats have to plague a country. But by the grace of our Lord there is nothing that lasts forever. They too must fall one day. Oh my God bless the poor soul of our friend, brother and let their blood spill to bring progress in their family. Their names would never wipe out from our memory. To God be the glory.

Posted by: [Ebot A. Armsty](#) | May 4, 2005 05:58 AM

It is terrible the kind of things human beings can do. How can the government say youths are the leaders of tomorrow yet send armed men against unarmed students? I pray their souls will rest in perfect peace. The families should take heart and know that it was God's will. The men who shot will pay the price somehow someday.

Posted by: [vera](#) | May 4, 2005 01:09 PM

Dear brothers, you are the M. Luthers of Cameroon University struggles. May your Souls R.I.P. And may the Almighty grant to your parents and relatives the much needed comfort and solace at this time of great grief. May hell descend speedily on your murderers!

Posted by: [Monik](#) | May 5, 2005 12:15 AM

It is really unfortunate that at the end of the day life can be this short. After having laboured to rise through the echelons of scholarship with the blood and sweat of one's parents, the life of a beacon can be extinguished in so short a time, by some blood thirsty, gun tooting maniacs who have no sanctity for human life. But I have hope because of my strong conviction that whether [one] identifies this gruesome killing as a crime or not, there is a force whose dominion reigns not only on earth but equally in heaven to whom we will give an account one day. If someone can just confirm to me that the late Nforlem passed through CCAST Bambili then I can concur that I knew him.

Posted by: [Ambe Isy](#) | May 5, 2005 08:16 AM

Government Smuggles Out Student's Corpse from Mortuary

By Pegue Manga

A clutch of gendarmes Tuesday, May 10, at 4:00 am, smuggled the corpse of Aloysius Ambouer Dahuanja, from the Buea hospital mortuary and handed it to the slain student's family in Ekona, Muyuka Subdivision.



Dahuanja's remains had been in the mortuary since Thursday, April 28, after security forces shot him on his head in Molyko, Buea, following a violent strike by Buea University students.



Dahuanja's remains being wheeled to final abode by father and kid brother

Eyewitnesses told The Post that the corpse was guarded by heavily armed gendarmes amidst a heavy downpour.

The deceased's father, Martin Dahuanja Abe, told The Post that his son's corpse was still icing, when the gendarmes brought it. The decision to hand over the corpse under the cover of darkness was at the instance of the Southwest administration that had mobilised the police and gendarmes in fear of a possible demonstration by incensed students.

It would be recalled that irate students had gone on the rampage on May 5, following the removal of the corpse of Gilbert Nforlem, shot dead on the same day as Ambouer. Their anger was exacerbated when a gendarmerie water canon was used to disperse them. A day to the removal of Ambouer's corpse, Southwest Governor, Thomas Ejake Mbonda, put pressure on the deceased's family to accept the administration's plan for the corpse to be removed early in the morning.

On Monday, May 9, one Dr. Moses Anyi, a lecturer at the University of Buea, who said he was representing the Dahuanja family, signed an agreement with the administration on the removal of the corpse. According to the agreement, signed on behalf of the Governor by Victor Ayuk Enow, Social and Cultural Adviser at the Governor's office, "the family of the deceased promised to fully collaborate with the administration so that the removal of the corpse and the burial will be done in an atmosphere of peace." The agreement also stated that the "family will ensure that the University students wait for the corpse at the PCC Ekona, about 100 metres from the highway."

Only 15 members of the family, the agreement further stated, "will come to the mortuary for the removal of the corpse. It added that, "there should be no publicity of the removal of the corpse." But the family, which had even wanted the corpse to be removed on Friday, May 13, according to Abe, did not have the opportunity to be part of the removal ceremony.

"Last night (May 9), they were here and we agreed that the corpse would be removed at 8:00 am on May 10, but we were surprised to see it here as early as 4:00 am," the deceased's father said. Abe said the administration had emphasised the need to maintain public order and peace, arguing that May 13 was too close to May 20, which is National Day. He said the Governor gave him FCFA 1.5 million to enable him meet up with the funeral expenditure.

Abe, a teacher of Presbyterian Education Authority, Fiango 1, Kumba, said he was not given the chance to see Ambouer's corpse while it was in the mortuary. "I went there three times, but the gendarmes would not allow me see it. They said the sight of it might incite me into fury and further jeopardise public peace."

He said when he got news that Ambouer had been shot, he did not believe it, until a lawyer brought the names and other details. He said Ambouer, 25, was not involved in the students' protest when he was shot. "One of his lecturers told me he was doing teaching practice and when he left the classroom, tragedy struck." He said he had prepared an announcement for the funeral and handed it to CRTV Buea, for broadcast but that the latter did not do so.

Security Measures

Prior to the "smuggling" of the corpse, Abe said he told the Governor he would not want any security operatives to accompany it, but that Ejake Mbonda categorically rejected this proposal. So some security officials in mufti were deployed in Ekona, including some gendarmes in their uniforms.

There was a huge security build-up in Buea prior to the corpse removal. The administration had been hinted that a savage group was going to storm Buea on that day. The Post gathered that some 1300 gendarmes and police were brought in from Yaoundé and Bafoussam, to bolster security. They were instructed to shoot anyone who attempted to demonstrate, The Post was told. On the eve of May 10, all business premises were closed as early as 7:00 pm. Police and gendarmes patrolled the town, poised for a showdown with the students.

Waiting for the Demonstrators

But when Tuesday, May 10, came, there were no students demonstrating. The gendarmes and police waited in vain. Your correspondent saw a policeman who was stationed at the Sand Pit entrance in Great Soppo, move to a tierce gambling kiosk and ask for a copy of the game. He then walked back to the veranda of a store, which he had sealed, and started perusing the gambling pamphlet.

At the entrance to Great Soppo, a policeman sat on the veranda of a pharmacy, dozing. A police water canon was stationed in front of the grand stand in Clerk's Quarter. Some policemen sat on the canon, guzzling beer.

The security build-up on the outskirts of Buea, some five kilometres from Ekona, was even greater. A water cannon and three truckloads of gendarmes had been planted there. But towards evening no incident had occurred. Some of the gendarmes were reading newspapers when your correspondent drove past on Tuesday evening. By press time most of the forces had been withdrawn.

Burial

Ambouer was buried on Wednesday at 10:00 am amidst tight security on a piece of land recently acquired by his father in Ekona. The University of Buea was not represented. A native of Bassa, Njikwa, Momo Division, Northwest Region, Ambouer was born on August 9, 1980, at the Mount Mary Maternity in Buea, to Martin Dahuanja Abe and Clara Aghono Abentama, a petty trader. He was the second son in a family of five children. Before his death, he was a student in the University of Buea, Faculty of Education.

Ambouer was a good boy, the deceased's father told The Post. He was a lover of football and would stop at nothing to assist his family. "I am not going to let go. I will ensure that those who slew my son are brought to justice," Abe said. He said he would file a suit in the High Court of Fako one of these days.

Demonstration Postponed?

The Post had it on good authority that a planned demonstration, masterminded by a few local elite, was called off at the instance of Southwest Governor, Ejake Mbonda, who reportedly saw the timing as inauspicious. Originally slated to hold on the same day (Tuesday) on which Dahuanja's corpse was to be taken out, it was, meant to condemn violence and lend support to the action so far taken by government in resolving the crisis. The Post gathered that it has been rescheduled for today, Friday.

Will Government Settle Riot Deaths, Destruction?

By Azore Opio

The question burning the lips of Cameroonians, now, after the riot between police and University of Buea students is: will government compensate the parents of the two students who were killed by police bullets, since, by the look of things, they kick-started the violence? And, is government going to take punitive measures on the group of police details who caused damages and conscious pain and suffering to unarmed civilians? Of course, no amount of money can account for the tragedies. One can only imagine the pain and torment the bereaved families and those who lost property and sustained injuries have felt, and will continue to feel.

The deaths of those two students must lead the government to reconsider the use of lethal weapons for crowd control. Besides, whoever commanded the police unit that shot and killed the students must resign and face murder charges. And the Provincial top brass who handled the strike



Typical road block as mounted by irate students

carelessly should also reign. It has become clear that government's claims of educating the police force on the respect of human rights and training them in conflict management is an ill-natured inclination designed to mislead Cameroonians and the rest of the world to believe that it cares for its people.

If it is true that the Honourable President of the Republic, Paul Biya, signed a document authorising a judicial inquiry into the University of Buea strike, then it should be accompanied by a criminal investigation into the shooting, molesting of civilians and destruction of their property by the police. Anything short of that would be construed as rapacity and government's predatory instincts.

Conclusion

This chapter has described the violent confrontations between the UB students and the forces of law and order. One of the major reasons for the outbreak of violence was that the authoritarian university and government officials lacked the necessary tact and patience to manage the strike. Their attempts to crush the strike and their repeated refusal to enter into peaceful negotiations had the unintended consequence of prolonging the strike and fuelling student violence. The provocative and brutal behaviour of the forces of law and order also encouraged the students' violent response.

During one of the frequent violent confrontations between students and the forces of law and order two UB students were killed by combat-ready police at a road blockade.

However, the authorities had eventually to recognise that violence was not going to stop the strike, and they became willing to start negotiations. The next chapter situates the place of negotiations towards ending the strike.

Chapter 7

Reaching Accord: Negotiating Resolution at the University of Yaoundé

Introduction

The previous chapters have examined the causes and course of the students strike in Cameroon state universities. The next chapters document the various attempts that were carried out by various actors to resolve the strike. The attempts differed from university to university, and recorded successes or failures depended on the power of the various actors on the terrain. For instance, the power of the student unions differed from one university to the other and though some of the student demands were general, others were more specific among students in the various universities. This chapter focuses on the University of Yaounde, and it will be shown that the way the strike was resolved in Yaounde differed from that in Buea. As a matter of fact reaching an accord with the Buea university students was more complicated and protracted than any of the other state universities, because the university authorities in Buea were more reluctant than the university authorities in Yaounde to recognise the union and start negotiations.

VENDREDI, 29 AVRIL, 2005 - 07:28

Société : Réunion : Le gouvernement louvoie sur l'université

La grève des étudiants était au centre du conseil de cabinet d'hier.

Jean Baptiste Ketchateng

Le gouvernement louvoie sur l'université

La grève des étudiants était au centre du conseil de cabinet d'hier. Le gouvernement camerounais a fini par reconnaître que la situation qui prévaut dans les universités camerounaises de Yaoundé I et Buea, est une "crise". En effet, le communiqué publié à l'issue du conseil de cabinet qui s'est tenu hier à Yaoundé, indique qu'à la suite du rapport circonstanciel du ministre de l'Enseignement supérieur, "le Premier ministre a rappelé la volonté du

gouvernement de privilégier et maintenir le dialogue républicain, dans la résolution de cette crise”.

Cette offre conciliatrice, précède la décision de mettre à la disposition des universités, “d’importants moyens financiers” dont le montant n’a toutefois pas été précisé. Si hier le ministre de l’Enseignement supérieur, Jacques Fame Ndonga parlait de 2 milliards de francs CFA, au sortir de la réunion d’hier, l’on n’a pas pu avoir confirmation de cette annonce, et encore moins la répartition qui pourrait être faite de l’enveloppe. Et le ton de rappel à l’ordre qui transparaît derrière l’observation d’Ephraïm Inoni qui a appelé les étudiants “à s’investir dans leurs études, principal motif de leur présence à l’université”, pourrait ne pas rassurer les grévistes sur les campus. Mais l’amélioration des conditions de travail des étudiants à laquelle le gouvernement promet de concourir est une réalité qui au contraire des autres résolutions et promesses de ce conseil de cabinet, devront être rapidement vérifiables sur le terrain. En effet, la politique gouvernementale en matière d’habitat social s’ordonnera autour de deux nouvelles prescriptions.

Promotion des femmes

Au ministre du ministère des Domaines et des Affaires foncières, le chef du gouvernement a ordonné de mettre en œuvre la réforme de la réglementation sur le titre foncier et le permis de bâtir. Dans la même optique, le ministre des Finances a été chargé d’étudier la possibilité de mettre en place des mesures fiscales incitatives au profit des opérateurs privés du secteur de l’habitat. Pour le gouvernement c’est le moyen de compenser le déficit en logements sociaux qui résulte lui-même du désengagement de l’Etat qui n’investit pas suffisamment dans le domaine.

Pareillement, les mesures prises en faveur de l’amélioration de la condition féminine, consistent en des recommandations. Suzanne Bomback, la ministre de la Promotion de la Femme et de la Famille, devra s’atteler à donner aux femmes, notamment en milieu rural, des moyens d’entreprendre et conduire des projets qui leur permettraient de mieux vivre. Il s’agira notamment de promouvoir l’entrepreneuriat et l’auto-emploi féminins.

Finalement, la seule question sur laquelle le gouvernement s’est décerné un satisfecit, concerne la mise en œuvre du Programme économique et financier actuel de l’Etat camerounais. Les félicitations adressées par le Premier ministre au ministre de l’Economie et des Finances à ce sujet

traduisent-elles une bonne santé des finances publiques et de l'économie camerounaise ? Les étudiants de Ngoa-Ekellé devraient pouvoir le vérifier, avec la réalisation ou non des promesses faites par le gouvernement.

Minister Drenched in Rain as 20,000 Striking Students Boo

By Clovis Attah & Kini Nsom

Higher Education Minister, Prof. Jacques Fame Ndongo, was trapped in a torrential downpour for over one hour, Wednesday, while addressing striking students on the campus of University of Yaounde I. About 20,000 students of the University of Yaounde I, joined by some of their mates in the University of Yaounde II at Soa, booed and jeered Prof. Fame Ndongo, as he tried to persuade them to call off their strike, the most massive in the last decade.

Students gathered on the university campus early in the morning in continuation of their one-week strike action, in defiance of an announcement on CRTV that they had called off the strike mounted on campus when it was announced that the Minister of Higher Education was going to address them.

As the students waited, they chanted the national anthem and popular tracks with lyrics like "*Le pays va mal*" as well as Anne Marie Nzie's "*Liberté*". Thousands of students also carried placards expressing their grievances. Most of the placards called for the scrapping of the FCFA 50,000 registration fees and the reinstitution of bursaries. The striking students were in a euphoric mood as they chanted and listened to intermittent addresses by their leader, Mouaffo Djontu Robinson, who is President of the Cameroon Students' Rights Association, ADDEC.

Mouaffo, who said he was in communication with Fame Ndongo, announced that the Minister was going to listen to the CRTV 1:00 pm with the students at "Jerusalem". (The striking students have christened the area of the campus where they usually gather Jerusalem). He said the Minister had told him that important decisions would be announced during the news.

At about 12:38 pm, Prof Fame Ndongo, arrived at the University campus accompanied by anti-riot police. Prof Fame Ndongo moved around reading the placards of students, who had decided to sit on the ground. Students wailed as a sign of mourning and distress as the Minister moved around

reading the placards and talking to those closest to him. At the same time, the students' leader addressed them from a raised platform, using a public address system.

At 1:00 pm, anxiety gripped the crowd as the news jingle blared from loudspeakers. After the main points, the newscaster announced that the Minister had gone to campus to negotiate with students. As an appeasement measure, the Minister had already handed the keys to toilets and water point to students' delegates. (Lack of toilets and drinking water on campus were some of the immediate causes of the strike). Instead of the students jubiling, there were deafening shouts of "non... non... non!"

Prof Fame Ndongo was visibly stunned. As the Minister, accompanied by the Rector of the University of Yaounde I and other aides approached the rostrum, the students' leader called for calm. He then intoned the national anthem that thousands of students sang. Immediately Prof. Fame Ndongo mounted the raised platform, the sky burst open and unleashed a torrential downpour that lasted for more than one hour. The students' leader tried to shelter the Minister with an umbrella but students jeered. The Minister was then compelled to continue addressing the students under the weeping skies.

Prof Fame Ndongo started by drawing parallels between the name the students had given to their striking corner and the actual Jerusalem. But students were not impressed. "No to demagogy," some yelled. "Go straight to the point," others said. Fame Ndongo used different tactics to get the students to appreciate any of his proposals. Eventually he received "an important phone call". Students waited with anxiety as Fame Ndongo spoke on his mobile phone. After the call, he said most of the problems of the students would be solved almost immediately.

"Ici, ici," students yelled, meaning that they wanted concrete decisions taken on the spot. With constant booing and catcalls, Fame Ndongo temporarily suspended his attempt to placate the students and ceded the rostrum to Prof Sammy Beban Chumbow. Students were even more hostile to Prof Chumbow, who had said in an interview broadcast on CRTV that those striking on the university campus were not students. Prof Chumbow, who was in a suit, was equally drenched in the rain. He promised that the problems within the competence of the university administration would be solved immediately.

Fame Ndongo remounted the rostrum and announced that President Paul Biya had just granted a FCFA 2.4 billion subvention to universities. That

announcement did not assuage students' anger. "No to 50,000," they chorused. When Fame Ndongho tried to speak further, students started chorusing, "Echec, échec, échec", meaning the minister's intervention had failed. A visibly disappointed Fame Ndongho left the university campus clothes dripping with water and with a drawn face.

The students continued chanting liberation songs and listened to their leaders after the Minister departed. Speaking to reporters, ADDEC President, Mouaffo Djontu, said they would continue with their strike action until their demands are met. He said a delegation of 30 students would meet the Minister of Higher Education on Friday for discussions.

Comments

This is a measure we should have taken long before now. The condition of my fellow students in Cameroon is deplorable. They cannot afford for their daily necessities, yet have to pay a huge amount of 50.000FCFA in the form of registration fees, meant for the good maintenance of the education infrastructure, which however, is neither available, not to talk of it being maintained. A shame a University, symbolic as being an Independence period university like the University of Yaounde I, has not got basic utilities like public toilets, public water systems, etc. Why then pay 50.000FCFA? The subvention of the President is an effort, appreciated, but that is not what the student body is asking for. That is a temporary measure, but what the students need is a permanent establishment of rules to ameliorate their conditions. No to registration fees, if basic necessities cannot be provided, and the bursary system should be reinstated. These are measures equally good for the government as it will booster education in Cameroon.

Though it is said one thing at a time, the next demand shall be for the institution of postgraduate studies in all fields of study, and creation of research institutes, and annual journal publication, so that our lecturers can refine the notes they prepared while they were doing their bachelors. We should run with present environment. It does not give a good image of my beloved nation if I have to travel to Germany to do a research, something which could be done with pride in Cameroon, if the research institutes were there. Our education sector should be considered like seeds for the administration of tomorrow's Cameroon that would have stronger roots to be able to dance to the tune of globalisation and face the challenges thereof.

Posted by: [Ngange Nfor Ngala](#) | April 28, 2005 09:30 AM

“Fame Ndongo remounted the rostrum and announced that President Paul Biya had just granted a FCFA 2.4 billion subvention to universities”. This is absurd! Is “President Paul Biya” a financial organisation or head of a government. Cameroonians should learn to use the phrase “The government” instead of “President Paul Biya”.

Posted by: [Enow, Denmark](#) | April 28, 2005 10:02 AM

Courage to the Cameroonian students!!! Why should we have the resources and suffer? You guys are only standing up for your rights, but please do not destroy any valuable things because it's going to take another decade for the government to replace, just like the toilets and we will be the ones to suffer. Courage!!!

Posted by: [LLLy](#) | April 28, 2005 10:58 AM

Courage, to you all. It is rather sad the [situation] in Cameroon; something really has to be done. I think we have reached the limit. Why all the suffering when the resources are available, forcing young Cameroonians to find their way out of the country like refugees because of the mismanagement of resources. We love our country and will like to study there, please Mr. minister it is time you do something.

Dialogue Flops a Minister Walks Out in Anger

By Kini Nsom & Nformi Sonde Kinsai

A meeting recently aimed at checking the on-going strike action that has paralysed activities at the University of Yaounde I since April 29, has come to naught. The meeting that lasted for over eight hours came to an abrupt end when Higher Education Minister, Prof. Jacques Fame Ndong, failed to agree with the delegation of the striking students.

According to a press release issued by the President of the Cameroon Students' Rights Association, Mouaffo Djontu, the Minister lost his temper and walked out of the meeting when the students insisted that the FCFA 50.000 registration fees be scrapped.

The delegation of 30 students, led by Linjoum Mbowou, was reportedly embarrassed when the Minister told them that anybody who was asking for the scrapping of the registration fees, was provoking civil war. "The Minister insisted he did not want us to discuss anything on the scrapping of the FCFA 50.000, which is our main grievance," one of the students' delegates, Okala Ebode, told The Post on April 30.

Okala, who is in charge of communication and strategies in the students' association, said Fame Ndongso avoided addressing the main issue and resorted to rhetoric. He said the Minister kept on stating that the strike was an affront to national security. At the beginning of the meeting, he said, they agreed not to discuss issues that fall within the competence of the Head of State. Okala said they were surprised that the Minister refused to discuss the grievances that are within his competence. When The Post visited the University campus on April 30, the students were determined to continue with the strike action until authorities fully address their grievances.

Meanwhile, in a press release No 000405/ADDEC/CEN/CC of April 30, 2005, the student leader, Mouaffo Djontu, called the striking students to stay calm in the wake of the Minister's intimidation. The reaction came at the heels of allegations that government would soon use gendarmes to disperse the striking students. Mouaffo reiterated his call for non-violence, noting that it is the most effective weapon in their struggle. He regretted the killing of two students of the University of Buea by the police. He said the only honour they could give to those two fallen colleagues, was to win the cause they died for the scrapping of registration fees.

The students vowed to continue the strike, saying that it is their only hope. They expressed disappointment that the Head of State has continued to maintain suspicious silence on their plight. Meanwhile, Mouaffo and five other students have continued with their hunger strike. Lying on tiny mattresses at the entrance into AMPHI 300, the students look frail and weak. Other students stay with them in solidarity.

Although the crisis meeting ended at the conference room of the Ministry of Higher Education without headway, CRTV radio broadcast an announcement last April 30, saying that the Minister would continue talks

with the students on Tuesday, May 3. In another communiqué read over CRTV during the 3 pm newscast, the Minister gave firm instructions to Rectors of all the six state universities to ensure the safety of laboratory equipment; increases in financial packages for the various departments; repair of toilets; refurbishing and immediate functioning of the university restaurants. The same communiqué also orders the furnishing of libraries with study materials; accord of allowances to students carrying out research; completion of the students' statute and the regular payment of the FCFA 50.000 in two instalments without increasing the amount.

Housing Dimension o Yaounde Varsity Strike

By Nformi Sonde Kinsai

One of the grievances as forwarded by the striking students of the University of Yaounde I, was brought to the fore May 3 by the Minister of Higher Education, Prof. Jacques Fame Ndongo. It has to do with the acute housing difficulties which students have been grappling with for decades especially in the foremost student residential area of Bonamoussadi in Yaounde.

In a meeting which held in the conference room of the Ministry of Higher Education between officials of that Ministry and Landlords of Bonamoussadi and those of Soa for University of Yaounde II, the Minister disclosed that one of the strong points being raised by the striking students has to do with inadequate lodging facilities. Fame Ndongo noted that Higher Education being the supervisory Ministry of the universities has the duty to discuss with landlords in order to get unanimous solutions to the problems.

He told the landlords that university students constitute a very delicate group to deal with especially as the destiny of every country lies in their hands considering that they are future leaders. Referring to the prevailing situation in some of the universities as the savagery of liberalism, he cautioned the landlords to put general interest first as discussions go along. Noting in all fairness that landlords are capitalists, the Minister reminded them that when general interest is perturbed social peace and state security automatically become threatened.

Fame Ndongu recalled an inter-ministerial text of 1990, which states clearly the conditions under which students have to be lodged. He said from verifiable facts in his keeping, rents are unnecessarily exorbitant, provision of electricity and water are little taken care of by landlords, hygienic conditions are appalling, insecurity on the rise, inaccessibility, etc.

He reiterated that for the utmost interest of state security, consensual decisions by both parties must be arrived at. Reading excerpts from the 1990 inter-ministerial text, one of Fame Ndongu's collaborators said the general notion of the document has to do with the relationship between students and landlords on the one hand and the university authorities on the other. The text was signed by the Ministers of Higher Education, Industrial and Commercial Development and the then Town Planning and Housing.

From the text, it was outlined that lodging environments for students must be comfortable, clean, secure and accessible. It states that agreement between landlords and students must be clearly stated in a contract signed by both parties and produced in three copies with one of the copies submitted to the Director of Students' Welfare in each of the universities. The text equally notes that rent is paid at the beginning of each month while the caution, which is deposited when the contract is signed should not for whatever reason ever be converted into rents. Another clause states that the landlord should inform university authorities to take necessary action if a student fails to pay his or her rents for two consecutive months.

The landlords are equally charged to provide electricity and water for which students are required to pay at the end of every month. The text further states that a mixed team from the ministries and the universities would be appointed to carryout field visits and prepare a report, which must include scales of rents to be paid by students. Meanwhile, any landlord found requesting money more than what is statutorily agreed upon would be punished severely.

In the face of these clauses, Prof. Fame Ndongu, maintained that the mixed team would be appointed in the days ahead and proposed that the team should be able to reclassify the various mini cités taking into consideration the quality of each. He equally reminded the landlords of Bonamoussadi that the land on which their buildings are found, and for which they request as much as between 12 and 24 months of advanced rents from students, belongs to the University of Yaounde I. The University obtained a land title for that land in the early 1990s.

When the landlords were given the opportunity to say what they think could be done to resolve the lodging problems of the students, many of them noted that some of the clauses of the text couldn't be applied as far as they are concerned. They talked of the bad faith of the students and quoted instances where some of them stay for so many months without paying a franc. To avoid the headache of quarrelling, they resolved to charge the students to pay for the whole year and therefore see no prospects of reverting to pay at the beginning of every month according to the inter-ministerial text.

They also revealed that many of the students graduate and refuse to leave the rooms and instead stay in the neighbourhood to make children. Others, who leave, according to the landlords, remove things such as bulbs, switches, toilet pots, louvers, etc. They also accused the students for subletting rooms without the knowledge of the landlords.

Article

The Minister of Higher Education on April 28, presided over an important working session, with rectors of the six state universities. Later that same day, he met with students of the university of Yaounde I, in the presence of rectors of the Universities of Yaounde I and Yaounde II, within the framework of a tripartite committee. Members of the commission welcomed both the state dialogue within the Universities as prescribed by the Head of State, and the amount disbursed by the state on the instruction of the President of the Republic, an amount which will help provide adequate solutions to some of the problems posed by the students. At the end of the consultation meeting, the Minister of Higher Education gave specific instructions for the following actions to be taken within the state universities:

- 1) The immediate equipping of laboratories.
- 2) The disbursing of finances for each department to enable it function properly.
- 3) The repair of toilets within the campus.
- 4) The rehabilitation of the university restaurant in order to ameliorate both the quality and quantity of the food.
- 5) The equipping of libraries with adequate books.
- 6) The granting of research allowances to students at the Doctorate level.

7) Finalising the status of the Cameroonian student following the ad hoc committee created on April 22, 2005 by the Minister of Higher Education.

8) An end to the harassment of students by some student and administrative staff.

9) Finalising the status of research and teaching assistance and the payment of money owed graduate students.

10) The regular payment of university fees in two instalments without any increase.

11) The putting in place in the Ministry of Higher Education of an ad hoc committee in charge of harmonising prices of rooms in students' residential areas and which will carry out a reflection on the increase of the demand in lodging.

12) The putting in place in the Ministry of Higher Education of an ad hoc committee to reflect on University fees in particular and the financing of Higher education in general.

The conclusion of this reflection will be submitted to the Council of Higher Education and Scientific Research during the next session. The Tripartite Committee created by Ministerial Decision N° 03/004/MINESUP/SG of January 2003 will see to the strict application of the above mentioned recommendations. The Minister of Higher Education is hereby calling on the higher university community to resume activities on campus from May 3, 2005.

Signed Jacques Fame Ndongo

Minister of Higher Education

LUNDI, 09 MAI, 2005 - 06:07

Société : Yaoundé I : Le mot d'ordre levé

Les leaders de l'Addec suspendent la grève, en attendant une solution à la question des droits universitaires.

Jules Romuald Nkonlak

Quelle serait la réaction d'Anne Marie Nzié, face à l'engouement avec lequel les étudiants présents hier à l'AMPHI 501 de l'université de Yaoundé I ont chanté "Liberté"? La chanson avait déjà servi aux manifestants des

années de braise, avant que son auteur ne fasse une sortie qui est restée dans les mémoires : elle n'avait pas chanté pour les opposants.

Mouaffo Djontu a précisé hier que la grève des étudiants devait échapper aux tentatives de récupérations politique : “Les opposants de basse échelle veulent récupérer ce mouvement”, a-t-il déclaré, en rappelant que l'une des questions qu'on lui a le plus posées pendant sa détention à la direction de la sécurité du territoire (Dst), mercredi et jeudi derniers était “Etes-vous militant du SDF?”

Dans l'AMPHI 501 pratiquement comble, les étudiants ont chanté pour donner leur onction aux responsables du comité exécutif national de l'Association pour la défense des droits des étudiants (Addec). Et le président Mouaffo Djontu, le vice-président et porte-parole Linjuom Mbowou, le secrétaire général Messi Bala ont, devant eux, signé la déclaration relative à la reprise des cours au campus de l'université de Yaoundé I et dans toutes les universités d'Etat.

Ce matin donc, les cours devront reprendre normalement, après trois semaines de grève. “Il faut qu'on soit capable d'arrêter et de recommencer. Si nous poursuivons dans la grève, on risque de tout perdre”, a déclaré Mouaffo Djontu tout en revenant sur les acquis du mouvement de grève qu'il a conduit, depuis le début de la grève de la faim le 14 avril 2005.

Il a précisé qu'il s'agissait d'une trêve, puisque le gouvernement, à la suite d'autres négociations qui ont eu lieu samedi dernier, a demandé un délai de trois mois pour réfléchir à un éventuel allègement ou à la suppression des droits universitaires. Il s'agit en effet du dernier point sur lequel les deux parties n'arrivaient pas à s'entendre, après qu'une commission ait été mise sur pied pour décider des allocations à attribuer aux étudiants en cycle de recherche, et une autre pour harmoniser les prix des logements dans les mini cités de Bonamoussadi.

S'agissant des droits universitaires, un premier pas, considéré par l'Addec comme une victoire, a été franchi. Il s'agit du fait que désormais, ils seront payés en deux tranches, correspondant aux deux semestres. Si hier encore les gendarmes et les policiers étaient visibles sur le campus, on s'attend à ce qu'ils aient levé le camp ce matin. C'est en effet l'une des conditions posées par l'Addec pour que les étudiants reprennent le chemin des AMPHIs ce lundi 9 mai.

Conditions

Les autres conditions sont la publication des conclusions de l'enquête sur les morts de Buea et la punition des coupables ; la libération inconditionnelle de tous les étudiants interpellés ; l'immunité garantie des meneurs de la grève ; la reconnaissance de l'Addec et son autorisation de fonctionnement dans toutes les universités d'Etat ; la poursuite du dialogue et la production dans trois mois du rapport de la commission chargée de la réflexion sur les droits universitaires.

La déclaration de l'Addec s'achève par une invitation des étudiants à la solidarité et à la vigilance. Ces derniers jours ont été en effet assez mouvementés pour les leaders de l'Addec. Mouaffo Djontu a été arrêté mercredi dernier, en compagnie de son "garde de corps", Thierry Camille Ndjiepe Fotso. Ce dernier raconte que leur arrestation a eu lieu à l'entrée de la cité universitaire, au lieu-dit "Orly", par des éléments du commissariat du 5e arrondissement, situé à Ngoa Ekellé.

Ils seront ensuite conduits à la division provinciale de la police judiciaire (Dppj) et à la Dst. Ils seront interrogés pendant de longues heures à la Dst. Ils y passeront la nuit de mercredi et ce n'est que jeudi, après un entretien avec le délégué général à la sûreté nationale, Edgard Alain Mebe Ngo, qu'ils seront libérés. C'est d'ailleurs le délégué qui les conduira, à bord de son véhicule, jeudi aux environs de minuit, à la cité universitaire.

Quant à Thierry Okala et Ahmed Messi Bala, ils seront entendus à la Dst samedi. "On nous accusait d'être les obstacles au retour de la paix sur le campus", déclare le Secrétaire général de l'Addec. C'est hier, aux environs de 16h, que Gabriel Keugni Gomsi et Yves Ndjip Nougua ont été libérés. Ils ont passé cinq jours enfermés, d'abord à la brigade de gendarmerie de Melen et ensuite au groupement de gendarmerie. "C'est le colonel Tchinda qui s'est occupé de nous. Il en a fait une affaire personnelle. Il avait même prévu de nous déférer à Kondengui", affirme Gabriel Keugni.

Bien qu'aucun chef d'accusation n'ait été formellement notifié aux personnes interpellées, leurs interlocuteurs ont souvent mentionné l'incitation à la révolte et le trouble à l'ordre public. Les menaces n'ont pas manqué. "On nous a fait savoir que nous étions fichés et que nous ne pourrions jamais travailler dans l'administration camerounaise", affirme Ndjiepe Fotso. Sur le campus, on a pu noter, pendant le week-end, le début des travaux, visant notamment à installer des points d'eau. Dans l'après-midi

d'hier, des ouvriers étaient en pleine activité entre l'AMPHI 1001 et la faculté des sciences.

Yaounde Varsity Students Call off Strike

By Kini Nsom

Students of the University of Yaounde are expected to resume classes today, Monday April 25 after their leaders went on air to call off a strike action they had started on Wednesday April 20. The Post gathered that some of the leaders called off the strike after a meeting with the authorities. The students had earlier vowed to continue with the strike even after meeting Prime Minister, Ephraim Inoni and the Minister of Higher Education, Prof. Jacques Fame Ndongo. Hundreds of students took to the streets in the Ngoa-Ekelle neighbourhood obstructing traffic for over two days.

They said they were protesting against the lack of drinking water, toilets and other facilities on the campus. They equally took exception to what they called all kinds of illegal fees and called for the scrapping of the statutory registration fees of FCFA 50.000. They also wanted Rectors to be elected rather than appointed. Reacting to the strike, the Rector of the University, Prof. Sammy Chumbow, said those championing the strike are not students.

According to him, even the students who are involved in the strike were being politically manipulated because they were calling for political reforms. Irrked by the remarks of the Rector, the students intensified the strike on April 21. They stormed lecture halls and yanked away students who were trying to ignore the strike. Then they marched to the Prime Minister's office. The Prime Minister later held a meeting with the representatives of the students in the presence of the Minister of Higher Education and the Rector of the University.

Inoni pleaded with the students to call off the strike, promising that government would look into their grievances. On Friday, April 22, Fame Ndongo granted a press briefing on the issue in the presence of the Minister of Communications, Prof. Pierre Moukoko Mbonjo.

Fame Ndongo called on the students to call off the strike for government to look for a solution to their problems. He stated that it would be impossible for the statutory fees of FCFA 50.000 to be scrapped because if

the students were to pay for real cost of their education, each student would pay over FCFA 600.000.

Apparently unappeased by government promises, the students gathered at their campus in small groups, vowing that they would continue with the strike until government effectively addresses their grievances.

Comments

It does not take a prophet to know that the UYI strike was to be called off prematurely, or if you prefer on grounds of baseless promises from a chronically untrustworthy government. There is an overflowing abundance of unkept promises in Cameroon; we don't really need any more. If students have the wisdom to revolt against deplorable academic conditions, they should have the courage to persevere for solutions to be made and not vain promises. Without being a prophet of doom, I said in my comment to last week's story about the strike that if the strike leaders were meeting with government officials, then the strike was destined for an early grave. And there goes the hopes of thousands of students! How I wish we could have dedicated leaders who hunger for solutions and not promises. And, don't quote me on this, nobody knows what sinister compromises were arranged behind closed doors. Students of the Higher Teachers' Training College also took to the streets on Wednesday morning, in solidarity with the students of the faculties.

Excitement

April 26, 2005 at 03:58 PM in [News](#) | [Permalink](#)

Yaounde Varsity Students End Strike

By Pegue Manga



Students of the University of Yaounde I are expected to resume classes on Monday, May 9, after almost three weeks on strike. Robinson Mouaffo Djontu, President of the Cameroon Students Rights Association, ADDEC, Sunday, May 8, declared during an extraordinary meeting in AMPHI 501 of the University that they have called off the strike because 80 per cent of their demands have been met.

“We should know how to end a strike. There is no need continuing because the government has reacted positively to nine of our 11 demands,” Mouaffo, who carried a bible, told a cheering crowd. Mouaffo suspected that some individuals have been trying to make political capital of the strike action. An ADDEC spokesperson told CRTV Television that they have reached an accord with the government. Consequently, the spokesperson said they want to savour the results of the accord for the next three months.

“Should the government fail to honour its promises we shall come up with other ways of protest,” noted the spokesperson. However, the students’ major demand, the scrapping of the FCFA 50,000 registration fee has not been met. “The initial agreement is that fees would be paid in two instalments in two semesters. A commission, which includes students, has been charged with working out ways to manage the registration fee for the next academic year.” According to the spokesperson, the registration fee will either be suspended or reduced. A commission has also been set up to examine scholarships for students. The students considered the accord with

the government a big victory, given that government had earlier manoeuvred some ghost students to frustrate the strike action.

It is not clear if the decision of the ADDEC executive might have a major influence on the University of Buea and Douala. The students of UB went on strike partly in solidarity with their mates in Yaounde. During a staff meeting on Wednesday, May 4, the authorities of the University of Buea agreed that classes could only resume after May 20, given the situation in Yaounde. But tension has been mounting in Buea as the authorities have reportedly mobilised some 1300 policemen and gendarmes for a showdown with the students on Tuesday, May 10. This is the date set for the removal of the corpse of Aloysius Abouam, one of the two students shot dead by security forces on April 28, from the Buea Hospital Mortuary.

Meanwhile, dialogue collapsed in the University of Douala on Saturday, May 6, following a refusal by the Littoral Governor, Gonoukou Haounaye to withdraw security forces stationed on the University campuses.

Conclusion

Despite various attempts to resolve the strike at the University of Yaounde, it took about three weeks to arrive at a settlement. Many factors have been taken into consideration to explain why it took so long to end the strike. The most important are: the failure of university and state administration to understand the problems of the students; and the general conviction in the civil administration that all could be achieved by outright force. The students on their part were unbending and so reaching an accord became a process not an event.

The final settlement was arrived at in a meeting between government officials and student leaders in which, according to the students about 80 per cent of their demands were met. This result was quite acceptable to the student community in the University of Yaounde. Students were glad to resume classes in order not to lose an academic year.

The next chapter opens with the bumpy road towards reaching an accord in the University of Buea.

Chapter 8

A Bumpy Road to an Untenable Resolution in Buea

Introduction

This chapter focuses on the attempts by the various actors involved in the student strike in the University of Buea to arrive at a settlement and restore peace on campus. One of the major actors was the revived University of Buea Students' Union (UBSU), which was charged to steer the affairs of the strike in a meaningful way although there was a counter weight association to it. One major problem, however, was the refusal of the university authorities to recognise the union and to start negotiations with it. Given this stalemate, the government eventually appointed a commission, the Abouem à Tchoyi commission to investigate the situation at the UB and arrive at recommendations to end the strike.

The UB students, acting now under the umbrella of UBSU, listed a number of grievances to the commission, the university and public administration. These grievances were to be met before the students call off their strike. The chapter ends with relating the factors that led to a temporal call off of the strike.

Students Outline Terms For Return to Campus

By Effa Tambenkongho



A newly formed outfit, calling itself the University of Buea Students' Union, UBSU, has outlined the reasons for the current strike action, stating certain conditions which must be fulfilled before normal classes resume.

Walter Onekon Angwere, political science student, who claimed to be the head of the "Provisional Government" of the UBSU, told *The Post* that part of the essence of the Union, is to facilitate dialogue between the varsity authorities and administration on the one hand and the students. He said the Union's first outing will be tomorrow, Tuesday, when, according to him, the Higher Education Minister, Jacques Fame Ndongo would be paying an official visit to UB.

The Union would be accosting the Minister, with the students' demands, Angwere told the press. The demands include the immediate replacement or transfer of UB Vice Chancellor, Dr Dorothy Njeuma the recognition of the Students Union, abolition, of FCFA 53.000 school fees, all courses to be offered in the re-sit exams; no money to be paid before collecting official documents like transcripts; well-equipped and updated laboratories, scholarships for Master's degree students, adequate toilets, lecture halls, good food, good drinking water, and other amenities to be made available to students; the updating of the university library with relevant books and the recruitment of more qualified teaching staff whose working conditions must be improved.

The demands also include "quick reports concerning the murderers of our two student brothers...", all gendarmes and police forces be asked to leave the campus immediately, and the release of all detained students. Angwere, told *The Post*, that he was positive the Minister would receive the union leaders. What if he didn't? *The Post* asked. We'll see to it that he does so, was the reply. He said he was begging his colleagues students, to lend him support adding that there is need for dialogue if classes must resume. Onekon said they had planned for the strike to last for just 24 hours, after which, they would open up dialogue with the administration. That same day, he said, the Registrar tried in vain to address the students. According to him, the Registrar could have been the one who invited the police, who later beat up students.

Answering a question Angwere said they thought it normal for the students to take to the streets first, before initiating dialogue with the authorities. "We might have made mistakes", he said, adding that students

went beyond the confines of the campus because they wanted the public to know about their grievances.

As to why students vandalised the university property, Angwere replied that it could be traced to the Registrar's refusal to ask the police to release their mates. The Registrar was quoted as having said that the students were arrested out of campus, where the university has no jurisdiction.

He wasn't sure of the government scrapping the FCFA 50.000 fees. Rather he saw the government getting strict on the FCFA 50.000 which, to him, is far better than the close to FCFA 60.000 which is collected at UB, because of additional charges like faculty fee, among others. Asked if they have the blessings of, or any consideration for their parents as they riot, he replied that they (parents) had no option but to stay calm and watch them act. On opportunistic members of the public who joined in, destroying both private and public property, he thought it was in sympathy with the shooting of their mates to death. He added that the students got information to the effect that their colleagues were shot by a gendarme officer and not the police as is widely held. Angwere said students consider CAMSSA and Student Faculty associations as spy networks, because they are working for the varsity administration.

On why he has finally identified himself as one of the leaders of the strike, and if he wasn't afraid of being harmed, the strategy was to go public so no one could possibly quietly eliminate him. He said if he were to be arrested, the public will know of it and he would stand lesser risk of coming to any harm. He wouldn't exactly tell if some students are still being detained, reason he said, why he is opting for dialogue now.

On his message to his mates and also those of the other universities, Angwere said he was sending condolences to the bereaved families, adding that the government will be compelled, one way or the other to accord them some reparations. "It is true that money cannot be worth human being, but it does make a sad person smile," he said. He appealed to the entire student body to remain calm, while UBSU is open to negotiations with the government. He invited them all to be on campus on Tuesday, May 10 to dialogue with the Minister.

He said he was appreciative of students of the other state universities, who were also on strike, and the solidarity shown, following the death of their mates. He said the death of these students precipitated the strike in Douala varsity. He also stated that all six state universities have resolved to

work as a team, reason why they are pressurising the government to authorise the creation of a National Student's Union in the nearest future. He said a wind of change is blowing across the state universities, as it blew in the 1960s and African countries received independence; in the late 80s and early 90s, which led to the introduction of multiparty democracy in most African countries. "Why can the wind of change that is blowing across the state universities not provoke reforms that will go a long way to ameliorate students' condition in Cameroon?" he questioned

We Will Resume Classes if Our Demands Are Met

By Pegue Manga

The Vice Chancellor of the University of Buea, in a communiqué read over a local radio station recently, announced that classes would resume in UB on Monday, May 16, 2005. The release also stated that the students would have to sign an undertaking of good conduct and pledge to abide by the University's rules and regulations. In this exclusive interview, Walters Onekon Angwere, who says he is President of a nascent Provisional University of Buea Students' Union, maintains that they can't resume classes until their demands are met. Onekon told *The Post* the strategy they intend to use to dissuade students from heeding the Vice Chancellor's call. Excerpts:

The Post: The Vice Chancellor has issued a communiqué stating that classes will resume on Monday. Will you be going back to school?

Onekon: The Vice Chancellor never asked us to go on holidays. If we are at home it is because something made us to be. Given the fact that she has not been able to meet some of our demands and she says we were out for a solidarity strike with our brothers and sisters in the University of Yaounde I, we had no other reason for striking. She is asking us to apologise by signing an undertaking.

This means that the students will be pledging that they will never be involved in any strike again. We are not ready to go back to school because she has paid little attention to our problems. She believes we do not have any problems. She is dictating to the students. She sees herself right up there and finds it difficult to come down and dialogue with us. We have decided to come up with a counter-communiqué. We have mobilised the students and tried to tell them why it is not necessary go to back to school.

How many students have you contacted and what has been their response?

We have been to most of the mini-cities and the students are in total support of our cry. The VC should have stopped at asking students to resume classes. But she went as far as asking us to sign an undertaking, which will cost us about FCFA 2000 each. This is what has incensed the students more.

What will happen to the students who will go back to school?

We will have to stop the students. We have a general assembly on today Monday, May 16, as early as possible to stop students from going back to class. We are not ready and if the administration is not ready for dialogue, we vowed not to heed to their call. We have distributed some fliers asking students to remain indoors. If they do not want to come out to demonstrate, they should stay at home.

The University authorities seem to be feeling the pinch. I just got a call from the Deputy Vice Chancellor in charge of Controls, Prof. Emmanuel Nges Chia, who told me my number was communicated to them by the Minister of Higher Education and they heard that I would like to have a word with them. The administration's approach is not the best.

Is ADDEC aware of this development?

My colleagues of ADDEC were here on Tuesday, May 10. We had discussions, which extended to Wednesday, May 11. Missi Bella, the Secretary General, headed the ADDEC delegation from Yaounde. He told me that the Minister had sent them to us to look into our problems and find out those conditions that the Ministry could meet immediately so that we could start classes forthwith and that the other grievances might be addressed later. We have forwarded those grievances to the Minister.

We want immediate and complete transfer of all students' responsibilities to "UBSU" as a branch of ADDEC, following the dissolution of other related associations formerly handling such responsibilities. The adoption of the ministerial decree by the UB administrator setting the registration fee as FCFA 50.000 flat for all state universities, with no additional dues at the level of UB; except the single due of FCFA 2000 to be paid by students to UBSU.

With regards to our fallen comrade we demand the immediate renaming of AMPHI 650 and 250 to AMPHI Gilbert Nforlem and Aloysius Ambouer

respectively. Added to this, every 28th April be celebrated in all six state universities. All courses for resit. A more qualitative and quantitative food in the student restaurant at a flat rate of FCFA 100.

Immediate negotiation by the Minister with the landlords and owners of student hostels for a standard price of rent. English 101, 102; French 101, 102 and Spt 100 should be elective and not compulsory courses. Recruitment of more qualified lecturers and their welfare conditions to be improved upon.

If some local elites decide to stage a demonstration to counter you, what are you going to do?

This is an academic matter, it would be unreasonable for them to try to get in our way. The University of Buea is not a Bakweri University. It is a state university that accommodates every other tribe in the country. I am against the idea that North westerners masterminded the strike. I do not see how Bakweris decision to stage a protest march is going to solve the problem.

If the University authorities invite you for dialogue, will you heed to it?

The University of Buea Student Union has members who have been attending regular meetings. If they want dialogue with UBSU they should make it public and we would go and have dialogue with them.

You believe you have the mandate to represent the students?

I have been doing a lot of sensitisation. My colleagues know me. I know they will throw their weight behind me.

There is a rumour in town that the students will be demonstrating again.

We will demonstrate peacefully this time. We are against violence. We want to let the administration know that we are not out for violence. We will stay within the confines of the University.

What message do you have for your mates?

I want to extend my condolences to the bereaved families of our mates who were shot by security forces - Aloysius Ambouer and Gilbert Nforlem. I

am calling on the students to support us in this struggle to liberate the University. They should be confident that we will put up a good fight for them.

UB Students Vow To Continue Strike

By Pegue Manga & Bouddih Adams

The strike action started by students of the University of Buea, UB, on April 27, might persist this week, as rival students groups have been distributing tracts, either calling for a boycott of classes or supporting the administration for classes to resume.

The authorities suspended classes after security forces shot dead two students on April 28. Though it was decided during a meeting held on the University campus that classes could only resume after May 20, the Vice Chancellor, Dr. Dorothy Limunga Njeuma, last week, signed a communiqué announcing the resumption of classes on May 16. A separate communiqué stated that the students would have to sign an undertaking of good conduct and must pledge to respect the rules and regulations of the University.

This did not go down well with some of the students The Post spoke to. Walters Onekon Angwere, who says he heads a nascent University of Buea Students Union, UBSU, told The Post that they never went on holiday on the volition of the University. Onekon said they would not resume classes until all their demands are met. (See interview with Onekon elsewhere).

War of Tracts

Parts of the town calling on the students to support the UBSU stance. It states that classes can only resume after dialogue. “No dialogue, no classes,” states the tract. “... We are not signing any undertaking; reason being that we will never have the right to express ourselves because we would have already given up such right by signing the undertaking,” states the UBSU tract.

The tract poses five questions on whether their grievances on re-sit of exams and quality of food have been met before asking them to go back to school. Some of the questions are: (3) “Shall we actually begin school with the forces of law and order on our campus? Is it a military barracks or a learning centre?

(4) “The fate of those who stood up for our rights remains uncertain and there is no guarantee for them and what will happen to them and lastly (5) on their comrades Gilbert Nforlem and Aloysius Ambouer who were shot dead. They promised a dead campus (Campus mort) beginning today, Monday, May 16.

A rival group calling itself UB Association for the Promotion of Non-Violence, UBAPNOV, has called on the students to go back to class. The University hierarchy has reportedly held meetings with the rival group. UBAPNOV has enjoined students to overlook the FCFA 2000 they have been asked to pay for undertakings to be signed with the University authorities. They argued that the destruction of state property not only worsens poverty but slows down development.

“Lest we (students) lose a whole academic year, UBAPNOV pleads with all peace loving and patriotic students of UB to resume classes on Monday, May 16, in response to the Vice Chancellor’s announcement. “Yet another rival group, called UB Solidarity Students Movement urged the students to avoid making themselves hostage “of a few mates who don’t seem to care about the future.”

The group says the message to the administration and government has gone through and things will never be the same again. However, the Onekon-led UBSU has promised to eschew violence. Onekon is urging the students to either come out to demonstrate peacefully or stay indoors. He said this time they will stay within the confines of the University.

UBSU intends to carry placards calling for dialogue with the administration before classes resume. UBSU reportedly handed a memorandum to one of the Deputy Vice Chancellors, Dr. John Ebanja on Saturday, May 14. On May 15, *The Post* learnt UBSU held meetings to come up with strategies to reinforce the strike.

But a vehicle belonging to the Buea Rural Council was seen in the later afternoon of Sunday, May 15 pulling off the tracts, which the students had posted around town. Gendarmes and the police were also reportedly ripping off communiqué posted by UBSU and posting those produced by UBAPNOV.

Inspection Commission

Meanwhile, the President of the Republic, Paul Biya, May 13 dispatched an inspection and evaluation mission to the six state universities to investigate the problems besetting them. The mission, headed by former Minister of Higher Education and Scientific Research, Abouem à Tchoyi, is supposed to evaluate the state of affairs in the universities and take stock of their problems and propose solutions.

The team will meet the local administration, the University authorities, lecturers, students, support staff and stakeholders in order to realise a participatory examination of the problems identified and seek lasting solutions. The Commission is expected to begin its mission in the University of Buea immediately after the May 20 public holiday. According to a release read on CRTV, the Commission is expected to submit its report on June 9, 2005. A communiqué signed on behalf of the Minister of Higher Education by the Inspector General of Academics in the Ministry, Professor Joel Moulen, on May 13, talks about the same Commission. It states that the Commission will comprise himself [Moulen], the Inspector of State at the Ministry Delegate at the Presidency of the Republic in charge of Higher State Control, Chi Asafor and the Sub-Director at the Directorate of the Budget at the Ministry of Finance and the Budget, Nkoulou Ndanga and that the report of the Commission will be submitted to the Head of State.

Dialogue Flops As VC Declines Meeting Students

By Bouddih Adams

The dialogue between the students of the University of Buea and the authorities, Southwest administration and the Commission set up by President Paul Biya, has flopped with the students blaming the Vice Chancellor, Dr. Dorothy Limunga Njeuma, for refusing to talk with them.



The students turned down an appeal by the Commission insisting that they must first dialogue with their Vice Chancellor before accepting to discuss with the Commission. Amphitheatres are empty in spite of the Vice Chancellor's, last week's radio communiqué scheduling classes for Monday, May 16.

The students, under the leadership of the hastily created University of Buea Students Union, UBSU, have vowed to continue the strike by

demonstrating every day from 8.00 am to the 3.00 pm official closing time, "...until Njeuma comes to reason and dialogues with us." For three days running, beginning Monday, May 16, more than 3000 students have been converging along the University Street, where they have named 'Jerusalem', carrying out demonstrations and calling for dialogue with the Vice Chancellor.

No Vice Chancellor, No Dialogue

The students have observed that when the demonstration began on Monday, the university authorities thought it would die down and sounded arrogant to their request. . Njeuma reportedly commented that she couldn't go to meet the students, most of whom have the age of her grandchildren. The students alleged that as a subterfuge, the authorities rather held a meeting with an outfit created by them known as UB Association for Non-Violence, UBAPNOV, but that things did not work out.

The following day, Tuesday, the authorities reluctantly started sending emissaries to the students. The students made a mockery of anybody who came to talk to them, insisting that they would only listen to the Vice Chancellor. First came Prof. Cornelius Mbifung Lambi, Dean of the Faculty of Social and Management Sciences. When Prof. Lambi attempted to address them, they shouted at him: "We want our VC to address us." He was almost shoved into his car. He drove off, back into the University. Then came Dr. Asheri Kilo. The students told her "This is not an issue of delegation of powers. Tell Madam [Njeuma] we want her, and only her, to address us." Kilo reversed her car and drove back into the University.

When the delegation from Yaounde drove in and met the students along the street, it stopped but the students shouted at them: "No Njeuma, no dialogue." They drove past into the University and after about half an hour they walked up the 200 metres from the VC's office through the inner gate of the University and met the students. When they requested to talk to the students, the response was, "We would like to talk with you but we can only do so if our Vice Chancellor comes and addresses us," the President of UBSU, Walters Onekon told the leader of the delegation, David Abouem à Tchoyi. The former Minister explained to the students that they are a Commission created by a decree by the Head of State himself and that,

through them, the students' grievances would be carried directly to the Head of State.

The students said they understood that but asked why their Vice Chancellor who would thereafter be with them, "day to day, would not want to merely come and address us?" They claimed that even though there were general problems which all the universities face, there were those peculiar to each university, including Buea, which they would want their Vice Chancellor to address before they meet the Commission.

They remarked that during the strike in Yaounde I University, the Prime Minister received students, the Minister of Higher Education came down and talked, sat and ate with students, including the Rector; in Douala, the Rector came down and talked with the students, the Rector of Dschang did same, "... why can the VC of UB not also condescend to talk to her students?"

In spite of the pleas by ADEC Secretary General, Okala Ebode and spokesperson, Eric Koizah Karh, who were in Buea since May 15 and have been discussing and comparing notes with UBSU, the executive of the latter stood their grounds. At this point, the mass of students dragged away Onekon while barking at him that the explanation was too much while the message was simple; namely that they wanted their VC to talk to them, personally. They continued chanting: "No VC! No dialogue!"

After some 30 minutes, the Director of Students affairs at the University, Ludwig Metuge came and the students allowed him to speak. He said Madam has said she knows their problems. "That they should bear with her and send a delegation to talk with the delegation from Yaounde. You know that she has served this country and you must give her some honour..." The students howled and booed, telling him they thought he had a better message and resumed chanting: "No VC, no dialogue." All the other students' groupings, including the Cameroon Students Association, CAMSA and UB Students Solidarity Movement, among others, declared their support for UBSU.

Non-Violence & Security

Since it started on Monday, the students have been reiterating that it is a peaceful demonstration. In almost every speech, which begins with the slogan; "One for all, all for one!" the students' leaders have warned that if any one of them throws a stone or any object at any person, the nearest people to such a one, should hand him or her over. They said anyone

throwing stones, is a traitor and blackleg, who would want to give them a bad name so that UBSU could be hanged.

Most of the students have white bands tied round the arm, purportedly as a symbol of peace or as an indication that their demonstration is peaceful. To contain blacklegs whom they said were among them as spies who would later brief the administration, the students created a group 20 volunteers as security guards.

In reaction to a statement reportedly made over CRTV that there was no security making it possible for the VC to meet with the students, the students, they saw it as another subterfuge, created to give the false alarm that the VC's security was not guaranteed if she came to address them. Onekon said attacking the VC is equal to a betrayal. The UBSU leadership then undertook an oath not to betray the cause offering their necks as the price of betrayal.

In A Lighter Mood

Noting that they could not just sit there and endure the strike and time, the strike leaders asked for any form of animation. Some students also bring in-door games, which they play when no animation is going on. Songs and poems were composed, some on the spot, and their authors presented them to their cheering colleagues. These were often interspersed by speeches by the leaders who kept on insisting on non-violence. A crying competition is organised daily, during which competitors mimic mourners and send watchers reeling and rolling with laughter. Describing those who died as martyrs of UB reforms, and swearing that they cannot betray their blood an animator asked that they should all cry in honour of the departed. Three thousand voices rented the air, drawing laughter from onlookers.

They sing songs like: "You kill students, we no go tire; we no go tire until you kill all of us," and in honour of their colleagues killed during the strike they sang: "They gave their lives for you and me, what have we done for them?" Mimicking pastors of the Pentecostal churches one of the students staged a sketch whose message was: "UB must be born again. Alleluia! Amen!"

Fried corn was shared to the students and one urging the others to eat remarked that: "Fried corn makes you to drink a lot of water and that maintains your equilibrium." They start the day's activities with prayers and

end with prayers. A minute of silence is observed in honour of their colleagues who died in the strike. As we went to press at 4.00 pm, Wednesday, the delegation from Yaounde reportedly rounded up its meeting with UB support staff and were meeting with the teaching staff or lecturers.

Meantime the Governor of the Southwest Region has issued an order banning any meeting of three people in the neighbourhood of the university in Molyko. He warned that violators of the order would be dealt with accordingly. The second gate to the university remains guarded by a dozen gendarmes, while there are some others on the campus.

Njeuma Tells Commission: There's Hatred, Backstabbing, Animosity At UB By Pegue Manga

The Vice Chancellor of the University of Buea, Dr. Dorothy Limunga Njeuma, has told the David Abouem à Tchoyi-led Commission, that there is hatred, backstabbing and a general atmosphere of animosity at the University of Buea, The Post has learnt.



UBSU leader Angwere, making a point to commission members



Another placard screams at SW Governor

The Commission, created by President Paul Biya on May 13, to investigate the problems besetting the university, met with the administration, lecturers and support staff at the University's AMPHI 750 on Wednesday, May 18.

In an introductory remark to the Commission, the Vice Chancellor recognised that the students have called for her replacement, for, according to them, she has overstayed in the University. She is said to have noted, however, that she did not appoint herself to the position of Vice Chancellor and has never asked to be appointed.

Dr. Njeuma's remarks reportedly ignited a debate, during which the staff of the institution proffered views and counter views, agreed and disagreed on what might be responsible for the present impasse in UB that has already cost the lives of two students. Rev. Father Jarvis Kebbei, the Catholic Chaplain of the University, reportedly said the students were sitting by the gate and asking that the Vice Chancellor address them outside on allegations that there is a shrine on the University Campus that might cast an evil spell on them. A lecturer, Dr Francis Mbutum, corroborated that they have heard rumours that there is a shrine where life dogs are buried in the University, which to him, could be the reason why the students are afraid to come in.

On why she has been hesitant to go and address the students out of the main campus, Njeuma told the Commission, *The Post* learnt, that she was scared that some of the people constituting the crowd, might not be students

and that she might be attacked by them. The Vice Chancellor reportedly pointed out that the students' call for her to speak to them does not reflect an attitude for genuine dialogue.

The students, Njeuma is quoted to have said, had hidden motives. On the issue of signing a good conduct undertaking, which is becoming a source of problem, the Vice Chancellor reportedly stated she was not the person who made the decision. She said the decision was taken at a meeting of Deans and Directors. Various issues were raised revolving around the violation of the University decree on the appointment of the Vice Chancellor and Heads of Department, including the absence of adequate funding, during the meeting that lasted for over four hours.

Dr. Moses Anyi of the Faculty of Education said there were persistent complaints of godfatherism in UB. He said lecturers growl that if you do not have a godfather you are not likely to be progress. Some lecturers cited the accumulation of posts, which, according to them, result in inefficiency. Our source quoted Dr. Martha Tumnde as saying that there appears to be a Northwest/Southwest divide, which is causing a lot of tension. Another lecturer warned that the situation should be arrested immediately; else it might result in the Hutu-Tutsi type of genocide. The Southwest Elite Association, SWELA, was condemned for attempting to project this feeling. Emmanuel Yenshu of the Department of Sociology and Anthropology reportedly insinuated that a local newspaper was fanning the embers of the strike and supporting the students.

He said the paper appears to be interfering with the franchise of the University. But someone retorted that a local radio station too had given its airtime to SWELA, to denounce the strike as a graffi or Northwest conspiracy. Dr. Bate Besong, for his part, reportedly said the University of Buea has been over-politicised. He enjoined the Commission to check the history of past student union leaders in UB. "They have ended up as graduates of Kondengui," he said.

Financial Constraints

Dr. Johnnie Fonyam, lecturer in the Department of Law, is said to have stated that lecturers' salaries were so very low, adding that this has prompted some of them to flee to Europe and the United States. Fonyam said the former Minister of Higher Education, Jean Marie Atangana Mebara, had

improved the situation during his tenure and had promised that there was a three-year programme to improve on lecturers' salaries. "Nothing has been done after the first phase," he is quoted as having lamented.

Dr. Effange, a new staff of the Chemistry Department, The Post was informed, complained that government was less than honest in the way it deals with Higher Education. He felt that government was not communicating and not letting the public know that higher education is expensive. "Government creates the impression that it can provide many things. This has created a situation of institutional mediocrity in the higher education sector," he thundered.

Commission Reacts

The Post learnt that after listening to the lecturers, the Commission stated that it has to go to the bottom of the issues. They advised people, even those they thought might be afraid to express themselves in the hall for fear of victimisation, to write their views and submit to them. The Commission kept going back to the working climate in the University. The consensus of opinion was that the working atmosphere at the University reeks of poison and hatred.

To deal with the problem of mysticism, the Commission selected a team, comprising members of the clergy and staff of the university whom the students have confidence in, to go and talk to the students on the road.

May 19, 2005 at 09:48 PM in [Special Report: The University of Buea Crisis](#) | [Permalink](#)

Comments

Yes maa, you didn't appoint yourself, is that the reason why you are acting in this way, anyway that is a blow on the face of the person who appointed you. Concerning the shrine in UB, this rumour has been going on for years, if Njeuma is against this what makes her hesitate to come out, pride aside. We shall know one day, nothing hides under the sun. The lecturers are now talking, thank the students for making you voice your own

problems, support them well, they are doing a great job. Students stand firm, no empty promises this time around, let them act immediately.

Posted by: [Jane N](#) | May 20, 2005 07:31 AM

Refusal to address striking student is surely one of the VC's administrative strategy. I do remember very well that during the strike of 1995/96 (in which the Registrar's old fashioned Beetle-like car was burnt) the student asked her to address them (on the second day of the strike along the University entrance) and she refused. I doubt if that was still for the same reason given that the atmosphere was flooded with top security officers as well as provincial administrators (including the then Provincial Secretary of state).

UB Alumni in UGent Belgium.

Posted by: [Gideon](#) | May 20, 2005 07:23 AM

I wish to thank the Post, for efforts in covering the crisis at U.B. I wish to strongly beg that, they follow the Commission to see into the issue of Mysticism. It will be of great importance to know more about it. 'A shrine, where life frogs are buried'. Please, track this down for us.

Posted by: [Mona](#) | May 20, 2005 07:20 AM

I want to thank the Post for this opportunity given to me again to express myself and to advice my junior colleagues of the University of Buea on what to do. Bros I want to thank you again for keeping to your decisions not to be back in class. You guys did not call classes off but Mama did so let her come and dialogue with you guys first and making sure 75% of your demands are met before thinking of going to school. Mr. President of UBSU, I owe you much for the challenge you took. Boy stand firm GOD will take control of all. I am praying for you guys. Don't be carried with the Northwest/Southwest problem that is an Educational problem, so allow the blacklegs and ungrateful Bakweres' to go on with. No Mama No Class. Greetings from Västerås, Sweden Papi

Posted by: [Papi- Västereås, Sweden](#) | May 20, 2005 02:15 AM

As Njeuma is proving to be so tough never to come down to the level of his grandsons and daughters to listen to their complains and have a word with them, let the students hold up to their decision and we see what will happen at the end of the day. Defiant to surface to the students and dialogue with them means taking the path of deception and promising to never change in her behaviour. Politics has ruled the life of everyone/sectors in Cameroon. It is time for her to step down if she was appointed to that post by a Presidential Decree from the god of Cameroon. Her Godfather should now know that we Anglophones don't need her and politics in our educational system.

Posted by: [Divvy](#) | May 19, 2005 10:53 PM

Njeuma Orders UB Students: Resume Classes Today or Never

By Pegue Manga

The standoff between students of the University of Buea and their Vice Chancellor, Dr. Dorothy Limunga Njeuma, promises to prolong this week with the latter having signed a weekend press release instructing the students to go back to class on Monday, May 23, failing which they would be considered as having withdrawn from the University. This has incensed the nascent students' Union, UBSU, which on Sunday, May 22, circulated tracts calling on the students not to heed the Vice Chancellor's call. In a release issued on May 20, titled Reminder about Resumption of Classes, the Vice Chancellor stated that classes for the second semester of the 2004/2005 academic year were supposed to have resumed on Monday, May 16, 2005. "Considering that very few students turned up for classes, the Vice-Chancellor wishes once again, to advise students, in their own interest, to resume classes unfailingly, on Monday, 23 May 2005.

Any student who does not show up for classes on that date, will be considered to have withdrawn from the University of Buea," the release stated. The Vice Chancellor warned that anybody who tries to prevent the students from going to class would be sanctioned. But UBSU assures the students in their tracts that "Only the Minister of Higher Education has a right to dismiss a student and only the President of the Republic has the right to close down a University." UBSU is confident that the government cannot close down the University because if they do so, they would be jeopardising

the future of 8600 students. They warned that this might lead to political instability and/or civil war. The tract stated that closure of the University would strain Cameroon's relation with international bodies. "There are international bodies watching.

Amnesty International, UN, UNESCO and the Commonwealth are all watching. So do not be afraid. Do not heed such a call," stated the tract. The students said under the Constitution of Cameroon and the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, they have a right to strike. "Let us keep the struggle. Victory is on our way and our fallen brothers are watching. Did we spill their blood in vain?" The Vice Chancellor's press release, *The Post* learnt, was read in the different churches in Buea.

Any Hope for Dialogue?

Walter Onekon Angwere, President of the Buea University Students Union, UBSU, told *The Post* Saturday, that they have been making overtures for dialogue with the Vice Chancellor, with little success. He said though the Vice Chancellor's press release has an imputation of threats, he was confident that the students know what they want and would stand by it.

"We have met top personalities in the Region. I met the Governor two days before May 20, and he advised me to take my colleagues back to class, so that we can participate in the May 20 festivities," Onekon said.

However, he said, he told the Governor, Thomas Ejake Mbonda, that he was just a leader, working on the wishes of his mates. "So if a majority of the students are not willing to go back to class because the Vice Chancellor is unwilling to come out and talk to them, I do not think I can push them further," he explained.

Onekon said they (student leaders) would like to strike a balance between where the problem is and where the solution lies. He said he tried to convince the students to go and march on May 20, but that they were scared by a message put up by the administrative authorities and the forces of law and order, warning the students against marching with placards.

UBSU, he said, has been to see the Mayor of Buea, Charles Mbella Moki, whom they believe could use his mediation skills to establish an avenue for dialogue. "When the Mayor came back from the United States, I went up to him and explained to him our problems. He has been trying to mediate and maybe find a middle ground," he said.

The students have also been to see Hon. Emilia Lifaka, Member of Parliament, for Buea Rural; they have met the Moderator of the Presbyterian Church in Cameroon, Rev. Nyansako-Ni-Nku and the Catholic Bishop, His Lordship Pius Suh Awa, all in a bid to seek a forum for dialogue with Njeuma.

Alain Martin Nako, UBSU Spokesperson, said they have done everything to reach a consensus. “When we met the Abouem ä Tchoyi-led delegation on Thursday, May 19,, they told us that in a negotiation, there is need for one of the parties to take a step. So we are doing our all to take a step; that is why we have met all these personalities” Nako said.

He said his mates are not out of control. “They have given us their full support and confidence. They believe in our ideas and the management of the entire reforms,” Nako said.

He said they were ready for dialogue, because they do not want a blank school year. But he added that they have made their point and still stand by it.

May 24, 2005 at 02:31 PM in [Special Report: The University of Buea Crisis](#) | [Permalink](#)

Comments

A blank year is certainly not a good thing for the students of UB, nevertheless it will be even more detrimental to the so called UB authorities, who are champions in fighting for their stomachs rather than the welfare of the leaders of tomorrow. It is shameful for a so called leader of an institution in a so called modern democracy to, not be able to address her students, and kids as she puts it, in times of need, trouble, but instead pushes them into more trouble by condoning to their killing, arrest, and sufferings. Nevertheless one good turn deserves another, and please fellow students stand for your rights, defend them, and have faith that God will not only solve your problems but he will solve them your way.

Posted by: [Neville Forlemu](#) | May 24, 2005 02:55 PM

This “iron lady” posturing on the part of Professor Njeuma will only lead to more tragedy.

Posted by: [Frank](#) | May 24, 2005 03:36 PM

Can someone please explain to Madam Njeuma that she will not lose any points if she goes out of her way to meet the students. It is perfectly OK. Please come down from your high horse and do the right thing. I will be the first to oppose being held ransom by striking students; reason why I think many of their demands are ludicrous to say the least. The students cannot decide who should be the VC. There is also nothing like re-sits in proper Anglo-Saxon universities. If you fail in June, you go home, get a job and come next June loaded with quids (they drive the most flashy cars!) and re write your exams. We need some level headedness in this sordid affair.

Posted by: [Courtney Eko](#) | May 24, 2005 04:24 PM

I am once again touched by the death of another innocent student who has been killed by armed police officers as a result of him expressing his opinion. The on-going strike in the University is persisting because those who consider themselves as role models have failed to do the right things. If we consider this long standing problem as a win - win situation, then what then what is really wrong for Dorothy Njeuma to come out and address her children and grandchildren as she claims. What do we gain from destructive pride, what becomes of Dorothy Njeuma seeing these suffering students dying in numbers. Can Dorothy Njeuma justify these killings and the disaster she is causing to the only Anglophone University in Cameroon?. Can Dorothy Njeuma withstand this shock if one of her daughters was shot and killed by police officers for defending a true cause?. One thing we must know in life is that the pains you would not want to get especially in instances like death, by right others will not welcome it. Dorothy Njeuma should keep away self-pride and give priority to UB students. Leaders are supposed to be servants, I have come to learned that in the Western world, but in Cameroon leaders consider themselves as Lords.

We cannot continue to toil with our lives and hold no one responsible for these acts. The Governor of the South West Region, SDO of Fako, and Dorothy Njeuma should be held responsible and be judged according to the Laws of the Land for ordering the killing of innocent Cameroonians. To the best of my knowledge those who promoted wars like Adolf Hitler, Mussolini, have never been respected when compared to peace mongers like Clinton,

Mandela, and Martin Luther King. It will be encouraging if Dorothy Njeuma uses the footsteps of these peace mongers instead of using threats to solve what I consider reasonable demands from my fellow students.

It is better to come out with a concrete solution than to back out, because doing this Dorothy Njeuma will be inviting more problems.

Austine Arrey

Posted by: [Arrey Austine](#) | May 24, 2005 05:52 PM

That old lady should take it easy in UB for God's sake. She behaves like someone who's never been educated in life before. just being in a state of mediocrity is as simple as smacking a baby, but she wouldn't even dare attempt. What a terrible fate in UB? Maybe she'll regain consciousness when things must've become so deplorable. Wishing all the best in Buea.

Mbonde Ivo,
Seattle, Washington, united states

Posted by: [mbonde Ivo](#) | May 24, 2005 06:15 PM

One Dead, Five Wounded In UB Strike

A mixed squad of police and gendarmes clashed with striking students of the University of Buea, Tuesday May 24, resulting in the death of one person. Five others were wounded.



*Students jubilate with seized police weapons
Police seek cover as students pelt them with stones.*

Violence erupted in the morning when Southwest Governor, Thomas Ejake Mbonda ordered the gendarmes and police to disperse students who had gathered for yet another sit down strike. The gendarmes used teargas canisters to disperse the students who replied by throwing stones at the forces of law and order. In the ensuing battle, four students were shot, a police truck was burnt, and the private car belonging to a lady was also set ablaze.

The scenario was a repeat of the April 27 events, when the strike started. Incensed students chased and overpowered the police beating and wounding them. A female gendarme who was on guard at the university gate was fished out and beaten. Traffic was brought to a standstill. The strike lost momentum thanks to the arrival of a military chopper.

The following students were wounded: Akeaji Chefor, shot in the stomach; Chris Stanley shot on the shoulder; Kangaka Kingsley shot in the left arm, and Valentine Mgzenyui.

May 24, 2005 at 04:36 PM in [Special Report: The University of Buea Crisis](#) | [Permalink](#)

Comments

We are on the precipice. The point of no return is close. Once this moves out of the hands of students--mmh!

Posted by: [Frank](#) | May 24, 2005 08:39 PM

Government releases communiqué on the University of Buea strike.

A release from the Ministry of Communication made public last yesterday reads:

Following the recent measures taken by the government of Cameroon to meet the academic and logistical demands made by the students of the University of Buea, classes resumed on Monday, although in a half-hearted manner. In this way, a greater number of students wishing to attend classes yesterday were prevented from doing so by groups of persons having no links with the university, in violation of university freedom and the order of the governor of the South West Region forbidding assemblies of more than three persons within the university campus or in the close vicinity thereof.

The forces of law and order intervened to put an end to this situation and facilitate the process of normal resumption of classes. Thereafter, accidents came in greater numbers from Molyko, the neighbourhood where the university is located and violently took on the forces of law and order and the administrative authorities. As at now, some cases of injury have been reported, mostly on the side of the forces of law and order.

The government has taken measures to restore order and is calling on all parties to display a spirit of responsibility. The release was signed by the Minister for Communication, Professor Pierre Moukoko Mbonjo.

Source: CRTV website

Posted by: [dongala joe](#) | May 25, 2005 11:12 PM

Synes Communiqué on UB Stalemate

Given that, for over 30 days, the University of Buea leadership has been either unable or unwilling to resolve the crisis, SYNES in an extraordinary

meeting of 25/05/05 met to review the situation after its first communiqué of 29/04/05 on the UB crisis and in the wake of its prolonged and escalating nature:

- Considering that the crisis has overstretched;
- Considering that there has been a dialogue impasse;
- Considering that the presidential commission headed by H.E. Abouem a Tchoyi has come and gone;
- Considering that violence has again erupted with a new death, a number of serious injuries and the destruction of property;
- Considering that some lecturers who have either taught or attempted to teach less than a handful of students in class have been identified, their car numbers circulated amongst students, and their homes identified for punitive action;
- Considering that the misleading press release by the Minister of Communication and Spokesman for the government dated 24/05/05 stating that the students were being prevented from attending classes by Molyko inhabitants could unintentionally involve the parents and the population at large into a spiral of violence and vendetta;
- Considering the impasse resulting from allegations of mysticism on campus by the students on the one hand and the Vice-Chancellor's avowed fears of her personal security on the other hand;
- Considering that we cannot be unconcerned when our beautiful University which we have strenuously built over the years is being destroyed nor be indifferent to our students being killed by the security forces;
- Given that a trade Union has as its main objective the protection of its members' interests;

SYNES HEREBY RESOLVES:

1. Lecturers shall, for their own security, henceforth stay away from classes until the crisis is resolved.
2. The Governor of the South West Region should exercise restraint in the deployment and use of security forces on campus unlike was the case on Tuesday the 24th of May 2005.
3. We condemn in the strongest terms the use of live ammunition in containing students' strikes.
4. We strongly condemn the destruction of private and public property by students.

5. Madam the Vice-Chancellor, accompanied by her close collaborators under appropriate security, should go and talk the students into campus for dialogue. Alternatively, Madam the Vice-Chancellor, in typical Anglo-Saxon culture, should tender her resignation.

6. Any students arrested and detained by the security forces should be released forthwith, in order to create a conducive atmosphere for dialogue

7. We condemn the simplistic invention and prejudicial use of a North-West -South West divide which is being strenuously used by University hierarchy to explain away an otherwise complex and delicate situation which has unfortunately resulted in the extreme polarization of staff and students of the University of Buea and the larger population.

Done at Buea the 25th May 2005.

Secretary

President

Richard Akoachere

Dr. Jonie Fonyam

May 28, 2005 at 07:38 AM in [Special Report: The University of Buea Crisis](#) | [Permalink](#)

Njeuma Lashes Out At Lecturers

By Pegue Manga

The Vice Chancellor of the University of Buea, Dr. Dorothy Limunga Njeuma, has said the over 180 lecturers who constitute the Buea branch of the Syndicate for Higher Education Lecturers, SYNES, have contributed nothing to the beauty of the University, The Post has learnt. Dr. Njeuma was speaking on Friday, May 27, during a meeting between the Minister of Higher Education, Jacques Fame Ndongo, and teaching staff of the University of Buea in the AMPHI 750 lecture hall.

Referring to a communiqué issued by SYNES on Wednesday, May 25, stating, “We cannot be unconcerned when our beautiful University, which we have strenuously built over the years is being destroyed or be indifferent to our students being killed by the security forces,” the Vice Chancellor reportedly emphasised that no SYNES member has contributed to the beauty of the University.

Njeuma said there was lawlessness in the University. She is quoted to have said there was no respect for constituted authority at the University of Buea. She is said to have told friends of this newspaper, whom she suspected

were in the hall, to go tell The Post that she said so. Fame Ndonga is said to have asked from the audience the meaning of lawlessness.

The Vice Chancellor pursued her rhetoric. She said it was unfortunate that some lecturers have been supporting the strike and have joined students to ask her to resign. Njeuma asked them if she was the only person who has stayed long on campus. She challenged the lecturers to name the names of other people who have also overstayed in the University.

Dr. Moses Anyi of the Faculty of Education was worried about accumulation of posts in the University, which he said begets inefficiency. In response to Dr. Anyi, the Vice Chancellor said there are some people in the University who could go to the extent of killing others because of posts. According to her, to have a position, one must be hard working and respectful to hierarchy before one is proposed. The Vice Chancellor said all teachers at the University have offices and access to the Internet. She said only the Faculty of Science could complain, having been disconnected because of misuse.

Prof. Effange of the Department of Chemistry asked why the government gave out money only after a demonstration. He questioned whether that was not an indirect way of saying that they should go on strike each time they needed money.

Talking about delay in payment of dues owed academic staff, Njeuma was quoted as saying that the Faculties caused it and that when the central administration used to handle the files there were no delays. "The University owes only academic staff from Faculties that have not yet prepared payment claims," Njeuma is quoted to have said.

Dr. Joyce Endeley, Head of the Department of Gender and Women's Studies, raised the issue of all courses being offered for re-sit, one of the students' demands endorsed by the Minister. She appealed to government to reconsider the issue because, as she put it, lecturers need time for research and some of them even need time to go for medical check-up. Dr. Endeley also complained of the security of lecturers. She said students are very insolent and did not know how the Minister could help them come out of it.

Dr. Daniel Nkemzi, Head of the Department of Physics, suggested that entry requirements into the police force be reviewed. According to him, the police contributed a lot to the violence.

Pro-Chancellor's Resignation Threat

The Pro-Chancellor of the University of Buea, Prof. Victor Anomah Ngu, in his preliminary utterance, said when UB was created, he accepted the position of Pro-Chancellor because he personally knew Dorothy Njeuma as hard working and assiduous. He pleaded that lecturers should take note of the fact that most of the students who enrol in the University come from poor backgrounds. "Most of them have not been well brought up and trained," Anomah Ngu reportedly said.

He stated that in good universities, there are mentors who groom students but that this cannot be done in Buea, because of the huge number of students. "We should make an effort to inculcate good habits in the children," he appealed. Anomah Ngu said if the University had to continue in this indiscipline and disorder, he would write to the Minister, informing him to look for a different Pro-Chancellor.

The audience applauded these threats to resign, saying it was consonant with Anglo-Saxon culture. However, after an impassionate speech from Dr. Njeuma, the Pro-Chancellor took the floor again and appealed for oneness in the discharge of duty. He said Njeuma's speech was wonderful and urged lecturers to work as a team and to portray the high esteem, which Cameroon in particular, and the world at large have for UB. "For this reason," he declared, "I would continue as Pro-Chancellor and will only leave when the Vice Chancellor leaves".

Minister's Appeal

In his speech, Fame Ndong, quoting Francis Bebey, the late Cameroonian writer and musician, said, "God put our eyes in front, so that we could be forward-looking." He urged Njeuma to forget about the things she left behind and continue to work for the good of the University. The Minister called on SYNES to call off its strike. He said the Vice Chancellor couldn't be replaced, because it is the President of the Republic that has the prerogative to appoint and dismiss heads of Universities. He praised Njeuma for having done what he said was a marvellous job in the University of Buea. Today, he said, the University is recognised, nationally and internationally.

He called on all to go back to work in the quest not to have a blank academic year.

Comments

I am sad and disappointed to hear that much praises were given to Dorothy Njeuma by Anomah Ngu and others despite the fact that the University is in such a mess. It is also ridiculous to hear from Ma Njeuma that no lecturer has added any beauty to the University of Buea. That aspect on the part of Dorothy Njeuma shows the highest arrogance from one holding such good office.

How does she think those of hierarchy could be respected when her attitude represents rudeness and disrespect for subordinates. I will want Dorothy Njeuma to know that respect is reciprocal and not one way.

I have also come to realized that no matter how mad we are, the system has a few people they trust and the wishes of many is not taken into consideration. Dorothy Njeuma's action and choice of words at the meeting should have been a confirmation to the pro chancellor, and the Minister of Higher Education to politely asked her to resign. Supporting and encouraging her actions is a mistake thereby making the weak to become weaker and the strong to become stronger. What country in the name of Cameroon

Austine Arrey(Ossing]

Posted by: [Arrey Austine](#) | May 30, 2005 07:24 PM

These jokers (Anomah Ngu, Njeuma, Fame Ndongo) are living in another world, circa 1870. Patronising and threatening university lecturers and students in the way they do, makes you wonder whether they are trying to run a kindergarten, rather than a university (in the real sense of the word). If this is the blind acceptance of "authority" that passes for a university, which should encourage critical thought, is it any wonder we live in a dictatorship? This whole University of Buea crisis is very, very, sad, because it has revealed how downtrodden and browbeaten the staff and students of this institution (probably a better word for the place than a university) are. To call this gulag a university gives real universities all over the world a bad name. For these politicians to come and patronise the lecturers...the cheek of them! Who teaches the students, the raison d'être of the institution, if not the

lecturers? I would have thought they are the ones doing the most important job in the place!

Posted by: [PW](#) | May 30, 2005 08:44 PM

Dear Prof Anomah Ngu,

U are a role model to many and generations to come but if u would say, “Most of them(students of UB) have not been well brought up and trained”, candidly, I am not at ease with that statement for it doesn’t befit u. No, not Prof! I personally think there could be a benign euphemism. All the name, I still hold u with unparalleled esteem and u still remain my icon. God be with u.

Posted by: [Edwin](#) | May 30, 2005 10:32 PM

UBSU President on Why Classes May Not Resume

Interviewed by Nformi Sonde Kinsai



The leader of the nascent University of Buea Students Union, UBSU, Walter Angwere, was recently in Yaounde at the invitation of Higher Education Minister, Jacques Fame Ndongo. The representatives of the Minister with whom he and his colleagues eventually met, advised him

to take back his fellow students to the classroom, as a pre-requisite for any dialogue with the authorities, including Vice Chancellor, Dr. Dorothy Njeuma. But Angwere in the following interview explains why returning to school is daunting, difficult.

The Post: You were here for a meeting with Higher Education Minister, Prof. Jacques Fame Ndongo but only succeeded in having discussions with his representatives. What exactly did they tell you?

Walter Angwere: The Minister sent somebody to Buea to invite us over to Yaounde. We thought that through the meeting, we could arrive at a consensus, whereby, the Minister would help us come out of the strike action.

We have been talking to the representatives of the Minister - Jean Paul Mbia, Director of Information in the Ministry of Higher Education and one Machia Baniaken.

Mbia was using the wordings of his boss. He said his boss has asked us to go back to Buea and call the students back to class; after which we would then come back to Yaounde and go to the negotiation table with, first the Ministry of Higher Education and then the University of Buea administration.

From the outcome of the meeting, what would you say has been achieved and what is your stand?

Prior to that invitation, we had prepared some draft documents addressed to the Minister. He read them but unfortunately, he said he could not take decisions behind the Vice Chancellor of the University of Buea. These were documents that could help me convince or make the students go back to class. But unfortunately, the Minister has refused to sign the documents. He told us that he couldn't sign any document without the Vice Chancellor's concern. So, at this point in time, I am afraid our stand remains the same. We are, however, going to present the report as it is to the students and together, we will take a better decision.

One of the conditions posed at the meeting, The Post learnt, was for you to go back to Buea and get the students back to class and then move over again to Yaounde for further negotiations. What dimension would the said negotiation take? What I was told is that the Minister would like to see me here in Yaounde when I must have convinced the students to stop the strike action. I was told that after that, we are going to start negotiations but I don't understand what they mean by that. When they initially talked of

negotiations, we came up with a document, which the Minister read and confirmed that it is comprehensible. It is unfortunate that he could not sign the document. When he is actually talking of negotiations at this point in time, I don't know what I can say about that.

Each time there is a strike action and students are called up to meet the Minister, there is always that tendency that they are given or promised sums of money. How much did you people receive or how much did the Minister's representatives propose? Unfortunately, I am not out for that. Thank God that the Minister's representatives did not propose anything of that nature to members of the delegation. We did not even come to that point and I am not ready to come to that. The situation in Buea is a very critical one. You have to remember that we lost some lives in the course of the strike action. At the moment I am talking to you, people are still in the hospital and others are still being wounded. And from what I have just been told, the situation in Buea this morning [May 24] is in a way that people may still die and others wounded. In a cause like this one where blood has been shed, it is very difficult to go into that kind of arrangement. *The Post* also learnt that one Machia Baniaken is persuading you and members of your delegation to sign a document calling off the strike. Who is Machia Baniaken and what is the document all about?

To the best of my knowledge, this is the person the Minister sent to Buea to get us over to Yaounde. I don't really know anything about him. It was the first time I was meeting with him.

He managed to convince me to come over to Yaounde with a delegation. The Minister wanted a delegation of between 10 to 15 persons and unfortunately; most of the members could not be met at the appropriate time.

You see the number here is not up to what the Minister wanted. We are four of us here. I am not interested in the document you are talking about, for that is not where the problem lies.

Who was responsible for your transportation from and to Buea? Yesterday, we had some freewill donations from students to be able to travel to over to Yaounde. They freely gave when we told them that we would like to travel to Yaounde and meet the Minister who may help us come out of the crisis.

When we presented this proposal, the students made some good gestures and we came up with an amount that could drive us to Yaounde and back.

We arranged a car for FCFA 50 000 for a round trip but the Minister has given us FCFA 40 000 to use as transportation to Buea.

He expects part of this money to still transport us to Yaounde for further negotiations as they claim. From every indication, the deadlock still stands.

Satisfying the students would end the strike. But if they are not satisfied, I am afraid the students may not be willing to go back to school no matter what I tell them. One of the core problems is the Vice Chancellor's refusal to meet and dialogue with students. What did the Minister say about this? The Minister's representatives did acknowledge the fact that the Vice Chancellor is very impervious to dialogue. That is why at their level, they could not force her to do anything. They have asked us to go back and it may be they would do some connections and try to get her open to dialogue. At this time, we are waiting when she would be open to dialogue. I strongly believe that if the University of Buea Students' Union, UBSU, is recognised, the students would be happy and ready to go back to school. This is because they think that if they have to encounter any further problems, this is the Union that would help get the administration in contact to solve the problems. This way, we would be avoiding future strike actions.

May 28, 2005 at 08:25 AM in [Interviews](#) | [Permalink](#)

The Battle Between Troops And Students

By Azore Opio

The prologue was a violent outburst of tempers on a stage occupied by armed men against calm students. In the tragic melodrama of the insurrection and anti-riot, the students and the troops portrayed violence apparently prompted by the Governor of the Southwest Region, Thomas Ejake Monad's instructions.



The students later returned to re-light the fire

The real drama began when the Governor arrived on University Street in the morning of Monday 24, where students had assembled to further search for a solution to their problem, for, previously, the usual imperial solution to insoluble problems of appointing a commission to report, and the report noted and filed for life did not seem to work. After he had spoken to the police and gendarmes they started firing teargas and some really loud-sounding smoke bombs at the students. What seemed simple at first turned out to be a complex and tiresome theatre.

Both the troops and the students would come out of it effete. The troops were baffled by the unprecedented courage and ferocity of the students. It surprised even fashionable circles that the students 'held their grass'.

A swift onslaught against the troops began at the University gate. A few gendarmes who thought they were safely bolted inside the guardhouse received the first student blows of the day when the students broke open the door. A trembling gendarme darted across the road and ran for his life, one bootless foot tapping his buttocks. A short while later, a police truck made a quick U-turn some hundred metres from the University Junction and stalled.

With stones flying at something like 100 kmph from the students, troops who had found shelter behind the truck turned on their heels and bolted towards the police post; some had stone-cuts on their heads, others limped with shattered shields in their hands.

The students used the lull in hostilities to torch the police truck, but a battered police water canon quenched the fire. The juggernaut was later to receive a pelting that would have grounded an ordinary lorry.

Thirty minutes later, after the troops had beaten another hasty retreat, the students set the truck ablaze, this time inside the cabin. With black smoke billowing from it and flames eating away its bodywork, the truck painted images from a whirlwind, a paradigm of war.

From about half past eight to 3.00 pm, the boom of bombs and the crack-crack of sub-machine guns and the yells and boos of both students and troops as they dashed up and down the Buea 'boulevard,' round the blazing carcass of the police truck as they traded stones; and the dank, heady smell of teargas all roused the throb of action in Molyko.

While most of the local residents and some policemen and gendarmes watched in awed silence, perhaps because they were not students, some of the Buea population, probably knowing that the powers used to clobber the students will one day be used against them, provided palm oil and water to soothe the eyes of students smarting from tear gas. This was a clear indication that with time local Cameroonians will learn to go to the aid of members of the civil society under siege by state operatives.

Between midday and half past one, an uneasy calm returned to Molyko before the frontline shifted to the police post. Marooned in their own yard, the troops looked on helplessly as torrents of stones rained on them and the vehicles parked in the yard. Some of the troops used catapults to shoot the students. At first refugees on their veranda, the troops scrambled inside the police post as more stones flew at them, smashing the cars and making holes in the roof of the police post.

Looking drawn, hungry and desperate, the troops started firing live bullets in the air. A few minutes to two the first bullets found their marks on three young men. The curtain fell on the last act with a great splash of blood at precisely 2.12 when a gun flashed and thundered from the veranda of the police post. A man staggered, clutched his chest and fell, blood spurting from his mouth. He was dead. Another bullet had found home on the upper arm of a student. The people all stood there, shaking their heads.

The day ended with a warm white sun in the sky. The highway was strewn with broken guns, empty canisters of tear gas, scrapped vehicles, boulders and stones, electricity poles thrown across the road, call boxes and signboards uprooted from their foundations and a myriad of debris. Later in the night the angry troops had local residents who were going back to their various homes for their dinner. The troops had their own solution to the University dilemma: more violence, insult the students, provoke them, return their stones with live bullets. And the fact that the troops still used live bullets on unarmed students suggested that the Provincial administrators, including the security operatives didn't reflect on a better way of solving the University crisis.

And a military solution, a coercive war was not the answer. Mentally, these people were still somewhere in the 1900s. There was neither a University of Buea authority to comment on the day's events nor any other public authority to turn too.

Morbid Flashback

Thursday, April 28 was when Nforlem and Ambouer stopped police and gendarme bullets. The whole action of shooting the students had occurred so swiftly, with people walking along the road not more than a few metres away.

It wasn't so strange. There are things like this occurring everywhere to people. The world is so full of violent deaths. But the deaths of those young men were so sudden in a particularly creative art of cruelty - but who is to say which life is of more value? Value. Value? Value to whom, to what? The cops, gendarmes, Governor, SDO and other government officials did not see value in Nforlem's and Ambouer's and this time, Alain Achuo Amu's lives and those wounded by government bullets. On Monday 23, government troops and the Southwest Provincial administration once again demonstrated that they are not interested in human life and freedom of expression and association, possibly because it is remote from their daily affairs. The armed men were seen performing their deadly work; deadly that is to Achuo and the wounded.

Public debts, then, are to the cops and gendarmes who pulled their triggers at those young men. It was typical of Cameroon's forces of law and order in their seeking for the rare, the unusual and the exotic. It is true that the students may lack imagination, are rather unsophisticated in their choice

of tactics to sway government opinion to their favour without weighing the risks involved. However, they have become more surgical and have impinged on the regime with some collateral damage - some may say blind terrorist acts, but did the state have to use live bullets again?

The Governor

The whole problem boils down to a matter of patience, intelligence, charisma and humane feeling, I think. It seems the Governor blundered again. The important thing, when one is in such a position as the Governor's, is to be above average in intelligence and know how to approach disgruntled people - one must be a man of imagination, of vision, a man who can project his knowledge and his imagination and his experience; a man who lives actively with the people about him, participating in their affairs, understanding their motives and the urges behind their actions. The Governor would have sought these rare qualities and communicated to the students. Other Governors have done it. , then, do these other cocoons come from? As a matter of fact, they are entirely ruled by fact and their actions follow an inflexible pattern. I suppose I'll be accused of a belief in the inheritance of acquired characteristics, which are one of the bugaboos of ENAM.

May 28, 2005 at 09:31 AM in [Special Report: The University of Buea Crisis](#) | [Permalink](#)

UB Students, Troops in Another Bloody Clash

By Bouddih Adams

Alain Achuo Amu, a taxi driver was shot dead and several students received bullet wounds in a second round of clashes between security forces and students of the University of Buea, UB, on Tuesday, May 24. In the first of such clashes some two weeks earlier, security forces killed two students.



On Tuesday, several students were arrested, a police personnel carrier was burnt down, guns and ammunition were seized and destroyed. Several policemen and gendarmes were also wounded.

From Non-violence to Violence

The students had rallied that morning and were observing their sit-in strike just like they had been for the past week. Southwest Governor, Thomas Ejake Mbonda, is said to have observed that the forces of law and order have demonstrated weakness and ordered that the students be dispersed.

Following the orders of the Governor, gendarmes started horse-whipping the students. They retaliated by throwing stones at the gendarmes and a bitter confrontation ensued. The running battle which took place mostly between the University Junction and Malingo Junction lasted several hours. The students, numbering about 1500 threw stones while the troops shot teargas, a water cannon, clubs and guns.

Hard by, at Malingo Street, a similar number of students was also doing battle with gendarmes. At one moment the students would press the troops right to the Molyko police station and at another, the troops, with the use of

teargas and water cannons, would drive the students down past the University Junction and into the neighbourhood. But no sooner had the troops taken their positions than the students re-emerged in their thousands, with stones and catapults and drove back the troops.

Destroying Weapons of Mass Destruction

While security forces battled, arresting and whisking off students into detention, the latter were in turn, going for their weapons. The forces lost more than three guns, a box-full of teargas canisters and other weapons in cans and cones of various shapes and sizes to the riotous gang.

Some youths from the neighbourhood had apparently joined the riotous students by now. They swooped on the troops, sending them hundreds of metres away. They seized the police personnel carrier and set it ablaze. The rioters flung some of the canisters at the troops, which sent the latter running for cover while the guns were tagged “weapons of mass destruction used against us” and instantly destroyed.

The troops made futile attempts to put out the fire, with the facilities of a water cannon. Unfortunately, some of the things the forces fired at the rioters exploded in the truck and fanned the fire to the delight of the students who shouted with joy, telling the police, “you will not use that truck again to raid our residential areas.” Some gendarmes and policemen were actually trapped and manhandled. In certain cases their uniforms were torn to pieces, before they were allowed their liberty. A good number of them were treated for wounds.

At about 1.00pm, teargas and the other canisters seemed to have run into short supply. Then the forces resorted to matching the students, stone for stone. The students were to out-march the troops, compelling them to take cover inside the police station. They sporadically fired through the door or window to ward off the students. The students came quite close and set fire by the wall of the police station that caught on a window frame and blind of the upper floor of the building.

The fire was successfully put out. Stones rained on the roof of the police station seriously perforating it. It was not until a contingent of the forces emerged from the Lark-hall end of the premises and some reinforcement from outside town drove in from Malingo Street that the police station was liberated.

The Shooting and Killing

When the troops regained their original position they started firing bullets. One student got three rubber bullet wounds behind the tibia while the other three were shot with live bullets leaving gaping wounds from which blood oozed profusely. The 26-year-old taxi man, Alain Achuo Amu, who was slain, reportedly came to pick up a pupil from the St. Therese Primary School next door to UB.

His colleagues claimed that because he could not go beyond the barricade set up above Malingo Junction by students, he packed his cab there in order to trek the distance to the school. That is when the right side of his chest stopped a bullet. He reportedly did not make it to the hospital.

At 4.00 pm, a military chopper allegedly sent to pick up the Governor who was reportedly marooned in the university, circled several times overhead. Suspecting that they might be attacked from the air, some of the students stayed alert, watching and purportedly mapping out new strategies while some others kept up the confrontation with the troops.

After the shooting, most of the students carried their wounded comrades to the hospital as the confrontation simmered. When the pressure on the troops subsided, they went marauding in the quarters. They smashed the doors of students and non-students alike, beating and kicking in the process. Some policemen smashed the door into the home of one David Mbah, a traditional healer, living opposite their station. He was beaten and left dripping with blood. He ended up in hospital.

Now ostensibly in control, the police resorted to molesting passers-by - student or non-student giving them mud baths in some stinking standing pool in front of their station.

Passengers were pulled out of taxis or private cars and given the mud bath. Juliette Ngwa, 23, a petty trader who was from Douala in a private car, was dragged out, beaten, and dragged into the mud. She told *The Post* that she tried to resist but that the policemen used their boots to kick her into the mud.

She lost her shoes in the process. She said when the police were satisfied that she rubbed with mud, they let her to go but that one of them chased after her and administered one last horsewhip on her back. "That is brutality," she swore. "Even people who are not involved in the strike are

being brutalised. She said as she was leaving, some old women who were passing by were equally seized by the police and given the mud treatment.

A taxi driver, Frederick Ndukong Ngebuti, 30, was also pulled out of a taxi and molested before being forced to roll in the mud. He said all passengers in the cab in which he was riding were treated the same. Meantime, at about 6.30 pm students rallied at the Malingo Junction and announced that they had formed an interim government, because they had found out that the authorities were about to arrest the UBSU executive. They said the move was to keep the struggle alive, if the authorities thought that by arresting their leaders they had solved the problem.

“The train of Israel took 400 years, but still arrived at its destination,” the announcer stated, while urging fellow students to go back to their homes and wait for the next plan of action. They dispersed after a minute of silence in honour of their fallen colleagues.

May 28, 2005 at 09:57 AM in [Special Report: The University of Buea Crisis](#) | [Permalink](#)

Comments

Just reading this article, I feel a lot of madness in the air. Students and now diverting from the reasons for this strike and turning it into something else. In like manner the troops are mad, and whosoever is giving them orders must be equally crazy. What has Dorothy N to say about this? What is going to happen to students who have to graduate this year with lectures suspended now for weeks? Why can't money be given to equip libraries, laboratories, Amphitheatres etc.? Why can tuition amount not be maintained, I mean why can someone not use even “propaganda” to silence satisfy this students? In fact, if Cameroon government would not spend on education, what will they spend on? It easier to carry billions of CFA abroad but when it comes to using that for the betterment of the country, accounts are frozen.

It is a disgrace that Cameroon for example has only one medical school (CUSS), and because of high competition, students who wish to pursue medical careers, end up in Buea and the likes, reading biology and who will blame them if they wish to travel abroad? I have never seen where a soldier opens fire on a crowd without guns, there are many ways to gush rebellion and bullets and death is hardly a solution especially among crazy youths.

Cameroon military men, do you have any idea what it means to kill a student at Master's Degree level? Some of you ended in primary 5 and have been placed in the military by "god fathers". It is a disgrace, I am so ashamed of Cameroon. I suggest big Madame Dorothy considers resigning, she has even overstayed her welcome there.

If I were in her shoes, I will try my best to make sure that Buea has every good thing a university can dream of, instead she is there playing politics and taking sides. She thinks they will promote her to parliament next, let her start drawing her retirement plan. It is commonly rumoured that because of the funny system in the other French universities and the need to learn English to fit into global trend, Francophones are taking up all places in the University of Buea. Dorothy you have work to do! As for you Mr. South West governor, if I had magic, I will ensure you don't sleep at night! All your children must be grownups or somewhere in the West, why will you care how many people get killed? Let God have mercy on us all!

Posted by: [Cori](#) | May 28, 2005 11:18 AM

As a contributor to both students and the university, we have watched this issue intently. Originally we learned of one student who became unable to continue his education because of family finances, quickly developing a charity for the benefit of Buea's underfinanced students and have since then paid hundreds of thousands of francs for tuitions, room rents and food costs in an attempt to change one future at a time, for the benefit of all mankind. We watch now as young men and women see their future slip away as those entrusted with their education make threats and indeed, kill them for what at first was a peaceful demonstration against lack of human necessities. Our hard earned money has been wasted thanks to a small but vocal administration. Recent emails to Dr. Njeuma as well as several in the Ministry of Education have gone unanswered, most likely ignored as those in the wrong will, especially to those an ocean away whom they feel are of no consequence.

Administrators, we are a consequence! Your dead and bleeding youth in the streets tonight are a consequence! Bullets fired by an anxious police force are a consequence! The under educated adults of your future are indeed, a consequence! The young are the future for both our countries and although we are but a small group of businessmen and women, we are a loud voice in

your ear. We give this money to your universities from our hearts. We are the finances of your future and we stand behind the entire population of Cameroon and pray God's blessings on each student and family. Have the courage to lay down arms, sit in dialogue with the student representatives and have the decency to return an email. Your position in life can only be elevated.

David Rizzotto
The Rizzotto Family Trust
www.rizzottofamily.org

Friday April 27 May 2005: Talking UB Students Back To Class

By Pegue Manga

The atmosphere was gradually getting tense again on the University Street leading into the University of Buea Friday, May 27. The police and gendarmes who had been guarding the place for over three weeks were better armed and reinforced in numbers. A special squad of policemen had also been deployed.



UB students: Savouring a hard earned victory

Once again, residents of Molyko held their breath in fear of another clash between the students and the forces of law and order. Such clashes had led to three deaths and several wounded.

Apparently harkening to the Vice Chancellor, VC, Dr. Dorothy Limunga Njeuma's call for students and staff of the University to be on campus as early as 7:00 am that Friday to welcome Jacques Fame Ndongo, Minister of Higher Education and the Pro-Chancellor of the University, Prof. Victor Anomah Ngu, the students, most of whom had on Tuesday, May 24, fled their residences, re-emerged. However, they did not go into the University campus as the VC had requested but to 'Bethlehem', a corner on the University Street where they had been holding meetings for the past three weeks, in a show of bravery, resilience and virtuoso. This obduracy took the forces of law and order aback as watching from a distance; the number of students kept increasing in Bethlehem. In a short while, some 2000 students had lined up on both sides of the street. A gendarmerie colonel arrived in a green pick-up and urged the students not to block the street. He instructed them to keep to one side of the road. The students obeyed and retreated to Bethlehem, where they started singing.

Enter The Negotiator

Charles Mbella Moki, Mayor of Buea Rural Council, arrived on the scene at about 9:20 am. After concerting with the gendarmerie colonel, he moved over to the student leaders and talked with them, probably persuading them to welcome the Minister.

Later, a convoy drove in, carrying the Vice Chancellor, the Minister of Higher Education, Southwest Governor, Thomas Ejake Mbonda, and the SDO of Fako, Bernard Okalia Bilai. The car transporting the VC drove past the students, while the Governor and the Minister stopped. The Governor stayed in his car while Fame Ndongo approached the students. After a brief introduction of the University of Buea Students Union, UBSU, Fame Ndongo told the students he had come to listen to them.

He called on them to meet him in the University campus so that, together, they would seek a peaceful solution to the problem. Initially, there were few objections to this proposal but immediately the Minister and his entourage left, the students started protesting again, saying that Fame Ndongo should come and talk to them outside the main campus. Mbella

Moki intervened again and advised the students not to miss the opportunity to meet the Minister and make their point. He offered to personally lead the students into the University campus. After some hesitation, the students evoked the issue of a shrine on campus, which they claimed might cast a spell on them.

But the Mayor promised that everyone would be safe. A human chain was created with Mbella Moki in the lead. The students approached the University gate. Tension mounted, and as they got closer they chanted: “Holy Ghost fire! Holy Ghost fire! And before the Mayor knew it, they students had broken loose and were running into the campus. The policemen and gendarmes who were on the campus put on their helmets and stood poised for action. But the over 4000 students ran past them into the open Amphitheatre where they sat and waited for the Minister.

Disgust

Dialogue almost collapsed when Fame Ndongo arrived at the open Amphitheatre accompanied by Ejake Mbonda. The students threatened to leave the scene if Ejake was allowed in. But the Governor insisted on staying. The students called him a murderer and a liar. They brandished pictures of their slain colleagues and said Ejake should leave the stage. It took the intervention of the Mayor and Dr. George Nyamndi, Director of Administrative Affairs at the University, for the students to finally listen to the Minister. Meanwhile, the Governor was advised to stay in the background.

Time to Mend Fences

The University of Buea crisis has been settled, at least for now. It has, however, left painful scars on some people. It exposed some of the flaws of the Southwest administration and the unruly nature of the students too. However, there are lots of lessons to be learnt. The first error that must be avoided should be any attempts at the students to think that they are the winner, while the administration is the vanquished.

Veteran journalist, Peter Essoka, in an interview with this newspaper, stressed this point. According to him, the students should remain humble and respectful to the administration. The administration, too, should not see

itself as losers. This might only push them to be more vindictive. The upshot would be chaos, causing the University to be ungovernable. The government should also understand that University needs money to function and it would not be expedient to be reactionary.

The Vice Chancellor and the Registrar, Herbert Nganjo Endeley, complained that the University lacks the means to cater for its ever-growing population. This issue should be taken seriously in order to pre-empt future strike actions. The Vice Chancellor emphasised lawlessness in the University. This could mean a break down in law and order as it has been the case in this past month or that the status setting up UB has not been respected, like that dealing with the appointment of the Vice Chancellor.

This rather antagonistic atmosphere at the University, according to the Vice Chancellor, should be brought to an end, and this can only be through dialogue, initiated by the administration. The example of the Minister of Higher Education and his entourage and the Mayor of Buea should be emulated.

May 30, 2005 at 04:32 PM in [Special Report: The University of Buea Crisis](#) | [Permalink](#)

Minister, Mayor Resolve UB Crisis

By Effa Tambenkongho

The strike embarked on by students of the University of Buea, UB, on April 27 has been suspended following the intervention of Higher Education Minister, Jacques Fame Ndong and the mediation of Buea Mayor, Charles Mbella Moki.



The March on UB: Buea Mayor Mbella Moki (suit) marches arm-in-arm with students as he leads them into the UB campus to meet with Minister Fame Ndongo



Once past university gates, students break into a run in fear of the “shrine” allegedly on campus

The executive members of the University of Buea Students Union, UBSU, suspended the strike on Friday, May 27 at the University’s open Amphitheatre after the Minister met some 80 per cent of their demands on the spot.

However, they warned that if in two months the administration does not meet all their grievances they would resume the strike. Speaking during the meeting, UBSU President, Walters Onekon Angwere, said for the fact that

the Minister by-passed the authorities of UB to look into their problems, they would resume classes, while hoping that the rest of their demands would be met.

The Minister recognised UBSU, which was hurriedly formed during the strike. He granted immunity to all striking students and their leaders, and the students, who had been arrested during the confrontation with the police on May 24, were released. They are David Abia reading Political Science level 400, Paul Allang reading education/Geography level 400, Gideon Njong reading Education/Geography level 200 and Mabel Akerh reading Journalism and Mass Communication, Level 400. Fame Ndongo also promised to get all forces of law and order, deployed on the University campus since the strike began, withdrawn. The cost of a plate of food at the UB restaurant, hitherto sold at FCFA 150, has been reduced to FCFA 100.

The Minister said school fees for the University remains at FCFA 50.000 flat. It was also agreed that all courses would henceforth be offered in the re-sit examinations. Credit limit per student is supposed to take during the re-sit has been increased from 12 to 18. A commission composed of students and the administration, he said, would be put in place to look into other minor issues negatively affecting the students.

The Minister, the Southwest Governor, Thomas Ejake Mbonda and the students signed the memorandum on the spot. When the Minister met the students on May 27, where they were assembled out of campus, he asked them to follow him into campus so that they could dialogue and find solutions to their problems.

The students at first rejected the proposal after the Minister drove into the campus. But the Mayor of Buea Rural Council, Charles Mbella Moki, stepped in and told the students to respect the Minister and meet him on campus as he has requested because he had respected them by meeting them where they were assembled.

Mbella told them that for those who knew him, he too, was a rebel; "But in every rebellion there is need for a middle ground". He advised the students to strengthen their case and not to miss the opportunity to dialogue with the Minister, by getting into campus to meet him. "Hold the good case in that you are going to dialogue only with the Minister and not anybody", said he. He said their getting into campus did not mean conclusion of dialogue, but dialogue with the Minister was stage one. The students shouted, "yes!" to the Mayor. They clasped their hands together alongside him and

marched into campus singing: “Oh, home, my home, when shall I see my home, when shall I see my native land? I will never forget my home.”

Fame Ndongo, the Governor and other officials of the Region met the students in the open Amphitheatre. But when the students saw the Governor, they shouted, “Killer, murderer, we do not want any killer here”.

They brandished pictures of their slain mates, the photograph of one who was shot behind his head, and pictures on how the police dispersed the students with water, in front of the Minister and his entourage. Some carried placards with inscriptions like; “I have a dream that one day Mbamba must go,” “No to manipulation by CRTV”, among others.

The students refused to dialogue with the Minister, saying the Governor should leave the grandstand first. Fame Ndongo asked the Governor to remain at the extreme end of the grandstand of the open Amphitheatre.

Students Celebrate

After the signing of the memorandum, the students lifted the Mbella shoulder high in front of the Governor and declared him “our new Governor.”



Political Maverick and Buea Lord Mayor, Mbella Moki

The released students recounted their ordeals at the Mobile Intervention Unit, GMI. They said they were molested, asked to crawl like snakes; teargas sprayed on their faces and they were ordered to sleep in cold water for two days. They said they were ordered to cut grass for the days they were in detention.

The Mayor invited the UBSU leaders to his office where he offered them FCFA 500.000. Mbella said the gesture was to appreciate the students for the confidence and respect they showed the Minister. The Mayor said lives have been lost, property damaged and the end of such confrontation calls for celebration. He said the students should all take a drink and return to class on Monday, May 30.

Speaking to *The Post*, the Mayor said there was need to celebrate the victory because the town had been held hostage for long and now people were free and relieved. Asked whether he would not be accused of sponsoring the students' strike, Mbella said anybody who wants to make such allegation should substantiate it with facts. He said he is used to such accusations, but that was the moment to rejoice and not to apportion accusations. He said millions of francs have been spent to bring solutions to the University crisis so the FCFA 500.000 was worth spending.

Speaking to *The Post*, Angwere said it was unfortunate all the students were not present to share the drink. He said the rest of the money would be kept for future use. On the way forward, he said UBSU will have to call a general assembly of all students and call for a general election to effectively put things in place. Angwere hoped the Vice Chancellor would respect the Minister's decision. He said they had given the government two months to respond to the rest of their demands, failing which they would return to the streets.

The Vice President of Cameroon Students Solidarity Association, CAMSSA, Wilfred Mbah, said he joined the strike because he realised UBSU was fighting for the collective interest of the students. He said he was rejoicing at the birth of UBSU and when history will be written he said they would say they lived with great people, who are the striking students and their leaders.

May 30, 2005 at 05:38 PM in [Special Report: The University of Buea Crisis](#) | [Permalink](#)

UBSU-MINESUP Sign Accord

Considering the tense atmosphere that characterised the crisis at the University of Buea; considering the status of UBSU to promote dialogue and non-violence as a means of resolving their problems and in a number of efforts to open dialogue with top government officials in a bid to end this strike action, we have resolved that:



UBSU President and Minister of Higher Education sign agreement while Mayor Mbella Moki (with tie) looks on

We can start classes because the following grievances have been looked into which constitute more than 65 per cent of our demands on the memo:

1. A legal authorisation and recognition of the University of Buea Students' Union, UBSU, as the main body at the University to look into students' problems, and creating a strong link between the administration and the students as clearly enshrined in the University Reforms of 1993.

2. That all strike leaders have been granted total immunity as from the end of the strike action. This will clear doubts on victimisation and stigmatisation. In this light, the administration has assured us that the Minister of Higher of Education from time to time will follow up our

personal records in school; for example our results in which case he will have the right to intervene in the correction of our scripts where need be.

Again, our names should not feature in the States' Black Record Book, for this will mean that the government will never grant us employment after our programmes at the University.

3. Get all police and gendarmes out of campus from the moment the strike is called off.

4. That the school fees of the University of Buea has been reduced to FCFA 50.000 flat, with all other additional payments like medical fees, Departmental & Faculty fees scraped; with the assurance that the students' caution fees should be refunded to them at the end of their programmes.

6. That all courses to come up in re-sit examinations have been increased and the number of credits to be taken during the re-sit examinations have been increased from 12-18 credits.

7. That the price of food at the University Restaurant has been to FCFA 100.

8. That students will not sign any undertaking before they resume classes.

9. That the school administration maintains the toilets and provide taps, and public address systems in some lecture halls.

10. That the joint Student-Administration Committee has been put in place to run the affairs of the University. It is with the putting in place of this joint committee that other sub-committees will be put in place to look into the other grievances on the memorandum and give the students the desired results within a time space of two months.

Buea the 24th Day of May 2005

For the Government of Cameroon

The Minister of Higher Education (Chancellor of the University)

Pro. Jacques Fame Ndong

For the Students

1. Walters Onekon Angwere, President
2. Alain Martin Nako, Vice President
3. Mua Gilbert Ebua, Secretary General

May 30, 2005 at 04:52 PM in [Special Report: The University of Buea Crisis](#) | [Permalink](#)

University Of Buea Students' Union (UBSU) Communique

Following the dialogue between the students of the University of Buea and the Minister of Higher Education, and considering the fact that a good number of the grievances on the memorandum has been met, the University of Buea Students' Union, UBSU, have called off the strike action.



In the eye of the storm: Fame Ndongue in a heated exchange with a student

Students are, therefore, called upon to start classes effectively on Monday, May 30, 2005. They are also called upon to show a high degree of responsibility and take their bookwork seriously given that classes will kick off vigorously on Monday.

Sincerely, President

May 30, 2005 at 04:53 PM in [Special Report: The University of Buea Crisis](#) | [Permalink](#)

Comments

That's good boy u won the race. Keep up the spirit anytime and anywhere.

Posted by: [Papi- Västereås, Sweden](#) | May 30, 2005 05:10 PM

To the UB Students: I think your actions where brave and courageous. But time is not for Jubilating as you will tomorrow encounter more to react on as a union. My suggestion is; you guys should create more relationship with international organization, not forgetting unions of Cameroonians students from across the world, which would save as a sure and easy means to expose your struggle, hence call to the attention of international opinion at a wider rang.

Thank you, The Post.

Posted by: [Stevenson Lartey](#) | May 31, 2005 07:09 AM

Walters, Gilbert and Martin: That is a good job done there. In fact you have tried your best but one thing.....I mean the only thing that you will impress me here in Germany and my friends is to honour your lost colleagues as heroes and to declare the day they were killed by this undisciplined policemen a UBSU holiday. That means no classes every year on that unfortunate day...I think it's the 29th April when their colleagues were killed and brutalised and students should wear on black dresses whether a black shirt or trouser or skirt. How do you see it mola?

Bravo to you all

Posted by: [massamoyo](#) | May 31, 2005 09:41 AM

Hi Walters, Three happy cheers for you and your friends. You fought like a man and the victory is yours. You did not allow yourself to be lapiroed, or bribed. Two thumbs up for you. I hope the SDF and other groups would learn from you guys. Did one Dibo Ngu make mockery of your English above? Tell him too that primary schools have no students but pupils. He is very clever, Ashia for he!!!!!!!!!

UB Students Boycott Lectures

By Bouddih Adams & Effa Tambenkongho

Students of the University of Buea, UB, Wednesday, June 8, resolved to boycott classes, following a decision by the Vice Chancellor, VC, Dr. Dorothy Limunga Njeuma, to schedule second semester examinations to begin on June 15. The UB Students' Union, UBSU, also complained that the University administration was reluctant to recognise it. The students had earlier on May 27 suspended a one-month strike, after signing a memorandum with the Minister of Higher Education, Prof. Jacques Fame Ndongo.

They resumed classes on May 30. But on June 8, they complained that the VC had re-scheduled the semester examinations to begin a week earlier than the official date, which, according to the academic calendar, was supposed to be June 23. As early as 7.30 am, Wednesday, some students went to lecture halls and sent out those who were attending lectures, asking them to gather at the open Amphitheatre.

By 8.30 am more than 3000 students had rallied and when they learnt that some classes were going on, about half of the crowd left to disrupt them. At about 10.00 am they converged again and listened to the UBSU executive's address.

The students argued that according to University regulations, classes are supposed to end two weeks before the start of examinations. This VC, they said, flouted the regulation.

They said course are supposed to be taught for at least 13 weeks before examinations can be organised, but, they claimed, most of their courses have not been taught for up to 13 weeks. Besides, most students have not done continuous assessment in some courses.

According to the students, they could not attend classes for barely two weeks and sit for end of semester examinations. They said the time was too short for lecturers to complete their scheme of work, and too short for the students to get the required knowledge to qualify for any degree.

Rumours that UNESCO would not recognise the degrees of 2005 UB graduates disturbed the students, too. They said an international radio station carried an analysis of the period for a semester as recognised by UNESCO.

They said the semester in UB was 150 days, more than two weeks short of the UNESCO standard. Observing that their strike took one month, which is 30 days less out of the 150 days for the UB semester, they argued that a degree issued under such circumstances would not be easily recognised internationally.

Consequently, some 4000 students stayed away from classes and staged a demonstration to demand for an extension of the semester and the recognition of UB Students Union, UBSU.

“If UBSU is not recognised, it means the administration is looking for a means to penalise the Union,” explained Walter Onekon Angwere, UBSU President. He said all they wanted was recognition by the UB administration for the smooth functioning of the University. “There is no way we can work without the administration,” the Vice President, Alain Nako, added.

The UBSU executive said they were not spoiling for a strike as such, but to plead with the administration to extend the semester. They said also that the VC has turned down several appeals for a meeting with the Union, which, according to them, suggests that she is bent on penalising them. Calling for a respect of their slogan: “All for one - one for all,” the UBSU exco appealed to their comrades not to attend classes until their complaints were redressed.

The students then prepared a two-point memo on the recognition of the students’ union and the extension of the semester. They appended some 3000 signatures after which they marched to the administrative block, brandishing placards reading: “No extension of semester, no classes no exams”, “No recognition of UBSU, no classes, no exams and no University Games,” and so on.

They then sat down in front of the administrative block waiting to hand in the memo. The Director of Students Affairs, Ludwig Metuge, came out and told them that a meeting was holding to address their demands. He requested them to go to one of the Amphitheatre for a meeting with the administration.

Prof. Vincent Titanji, Deputy Vice Chancellor in charge of teaching who led the three-man delegation made up of Dr Nalova Lyonga and Ludwig Metuge, told the students that: “There can be no university without students, or without lecturers or without support staff.” He appealed to the students to present their problems in a respectful manner. “If you have problems, you let us know in an organised manner,” he said.

Prof. Titanji debunked the rumours that UNESCO would not recognise the 2005 UB degrees. He said there was a need for the students to participate in the University Games come July 9. Titanji said the decision to extend the semester was a decision taken by a committee of Directors and Deans in the University of Buea. He said the administration was still considering the accord signed by the Minister.

On his part, Angwere insisted on the recognition of UBSU by the administration and the extension of the semester. In reaction, Titanji said UBSU has already been recognised, but it has to present a constitution and its bureau to the administration, which will in turn provide facilities for them to operate. “You cannot expect the administration to draft your constitution for you,” he stated. He announced that examinations have been pushed forward to begin on June 21 and end on July 7, 2005.

He also requested the students to go back to class, while the administration was sorting out the problem concerning the recognition of UBSU. But the students pooh-poohed the Professor. The students shouted back saying, pushing forward the examinations by one week was too short, and they insisted that until the VC recognised their union by signature, they would not resume classes.

They said they were going to hand in the constitution the following day and would confirm that the administration has recognised it, if they see a letter of recognition signed by the VC. The students dispersed, promising to stay away from classes till the issues are sorted out and to meet the following day at the open Amphitheatre.

At the same time, the President of the Advanced School of Translators and Interpreters, ASTI, Association, Christopher Fon Achobang, grabbed the opportunity to enumerate the problems plaguing the school. He said their language laboratory was not equipped, there were no louvers in the windows, the halls are inadequate with no air conditioning, no reading rooms. He complained that courses that have to be taught for 39 hours are taught for 10 hours only. He requested that recalcitrant lecturers be penalised by the authorities.

June 11, 2005 at 07:00 AM in [News](#) | [Permalink](#)

Njeuma Tightens Noose on UB Students Union

By Pegue Manga



The University of Buea Students' Union, UBSU, that was hastily created following a month-long strike (April 27 -May 27), that rocked the University, has not been able to put its feet on the ground as the University authorities keep picking holes in the Union's actions. Since its inception, executive members of UBSU have received numerous letters from the University administration and the Minister of Higher Education, Prof. Jacques Fame Ndong, calling them to order.

On July 11, the Vice Chancellor of UB, Dr. Dorothy Limunga Njeuma, wrote a letter to Walter Onekon Angwere, UBSU President, asking him and his group "to leave Dschang," where they were attending the University Games, immediately. In the letter, titled "Unauthorised Actions Undertaken by UBSU Executive," Dr. Njeuma said "the official delegation of the University of Buea to the 2005 University Games holding in Dschang does not include members of your union.

You are consequently required to immediately leave Dschang with your group as your presence and activities have evidently become a nuisance to the Local Organising Committee of the Games and an embarrassment to the University of Buea." The Vice Chancellor accused Angwere and his executive of making some assumptions which according to her, they "have no authority or authorisation to make, in spite of your agreement dated May 24, 2005 signed with the Minister of Higher Education."

The Vice Chancellor berated the UBSU for using the University logo.

“The University logo is designed only for official use by the University and its legal structures. The use of the logo on the letterhead of your union is not authorised. You are, therefore, required to stop using it immediately,” Njeuma ordered.

She stated that UBSU does not have written authorisation from the competent administrative authorities, nor with the competent authorities of the University of Buea. “You must seek such authorisation before your union can operate,” the Vice Chancellor stated. Njeuma reminded Angwere that UBSU constitution has not been approved by the competent authorities, contrary to statements made in a June 27 memorandum the students’ union addressed to Heads of Departments of the University.

Consequently, the Vice Chancellor said the memo is not only out of place but null and void. “Students are not permitted to give instructions to their academic hierarchy in any university in the world,” Njeuma argued. The comportment of members of UBSU executive has also got to the ears of Higher Education Minister, Prof. Fame Ndongo.

In a letter dated July 13, which the Minister wrote to the Vice Chancellor, Fame Ndongo stated that students must respect the laws and regulations of the state as well as the internal regulations of the University. He urged the Vice Chancellor to take the appropriate measures to ensure that calm and peace reign in the University. The Minister’s letter, titled “Comportment of UBSU Students,” which was seemingly a reply to Njeuma’s July 11 letter to Angwere in which she copied the Minister, was handed to UBSU by Chief Prof. John Ebanja, Deputy Vice Chancellor for Control.

UBSU Replies

In a letter dated July 25, addressed to the Vice Chancellor, Angwere stated that by virtue of the Vice Chancellor’s letter, UBSU had changed its logo. “We respectfully urge you to take note of the logo on this letterhead as the only authentic logo of UBSU until further notice.”

Angwere, however, argued that contrary to the Vice Chancellor’s assertion, UBSU has not breached the June 27 accord it signed with the Minister. “We have, in no way whatsoever, breached the terms of that accord. We, however, respectfully appeal to you, to help UBSU to succeed in its mission,” Angwere stated.

As for their presence in Dschang during the University Games, Angwere explained that, “it was a bona fide attempt to show the world that UB was at peace with itself and that we were one family pursuing the same aspirations, so that UB can likely remain the place to be.” He said they were out to cheer their representatives at the Games for which they thought they should be commended rather than being sanctioned. UBSU appealed to the Vice Chancellor not, “To give weight to any unsubstantiated allegations and accusations that detractors and rumour mongers may be peddling with the intension of causing more pain and suffering to the executive and students of UB.”

Njeuma’s July 11 letter was just one out of the many correspondences UBSU has received from the University authorities. A letter signed by Cornelius Lambi, Dean of the Faculty of Social and Management Science, on the instruction of the Vice Chancellor, had called UBSU executive members, Walter Onekon, Alain Martin Kofele Nako, Gilbert Ebua Mua, Njifon Njoya Hassan and Martin Nzefeh Nkemamin, to order.

Dated June 27, the letter charged the students, all from the Political Science Department, with consistent involvement in the disruption of teaching and learning activities on campus, as well as threatening and chasing lecturers out of classes.

August 02, 2005 at 05:58 AM in [News](#) | [Permalink](#)

Fallout of UB Strike: Senate Cancels 2005 Convocation

By Pegue Manga



For the first time, the traditional Convocation ceremony organised yearly, to award degrees to graduating students of the University of Buea, UB, will not take place this year, The Post has learnt. The decision was arrived at during a meeting of the University's Senate at the AMPHI 750 on August 3.

A source told The Post that the decision not to organise the convocation was based on the claim that the students had not shown good conduct. "It was based on the logic that since students were involved in a strike, it would be inappropriate to say that they have been found fit in conduct and character, to be awarded a degree," stated the source.

The cancellation of the convocation was at the behest of UB's Vice Chancellor, Dr. Dorothy Limunga Njeuma, who, according to our source, held the opinion that the students would be fit academically, but would not be qualified in regard to their character. The Post was told that there might be no convocation even next year, until the students demonstrate a change of behaviour.

Sanctions for Students

The cancellation of the convocation came on the heels of another proposal from the Vice Chancellor, to the effect that students who led the one-month strike in UB as well as lecturers who prodded them should be identified and punished.

According to our source, the punishment was to include dismissal of the students. It was not, however, stated what kind of punishment would be meted out to lecturers. The Post also gathered that Njeuma observed during the meeting that the students she wanted punished were not just those identified as leaders of the putative UB Student Union, UBSU, but also those who actively took part in the strike.

But in the ensuing debate, a senior staff of the Faculty of Education reportedly made a lengthy intervention during which he adumbrated on the futility of punishing the students.

According to our source, he held that punishing the students would not be in the spirit of reconciliation and the need for the University to move ahead. Another Don also contributed positively in favour of the need to ensure that no punitive measure is taken against anybody in respect of the last strike. Their opinion enjoyed substantial support from the Senate, which decided against the Vice Chancellor's proposal to take punitive measures

against the students even though some Deans and senior lecturers were in favour of the move,” *The Post* gathered. It was concluded that, in order to avoid raising dust, bygones should be bygones. The Vice Chancellor also urged Deans of the University to speed up the process of printing individual student end-of- semester results. This time the University authorities decided not to post end-of-semester results on the notice board but to hand them to individual students. Students of the Faculty of Arts reportedly threatened to burn down the Arts Lobby if their results were not issued on time.

Re-sit Exams

The Post has also learnt that the decision the students reached with the Minister of Higher Education, Prof. Jacques Fame Ndongo, on May 27, over re-sit examination will likely stir a fresh crisis. It would appear the University of Buea is not prepared to respect the decision for a substantial number of courses to be offered during the re-sit, *The Post* has gathered.

“The matter is being discussed in the administrative circles of the University, although this is being done without reference to students who are principal stakeholders in the issue,” a source at the University told *The Post*.

August 11, 2005 at 01:03 PM in [News](#) | [Permalink](#)

UB Students Petition Biya

By Pegue Manga

Students of the University of Buea, UB, August 22, addressed a memo to President Paul Biya, urging him, amongst other things, to abolish the FCFA 50,000 university registration fees. The memo is signed by 22 students, amongst them Walter Onekon Angwere and Martin Alain Nako, President and Vice of the University of Buea Students Union, UBSU. “We wish that the registration fee of FCFA 50,000 be abolished. This is because of the high level of poverty in the country, making it difficult for most parents to sponsor their children in the university,” the memo stated. They enjoined President Biya to provide monthly allowances to students. The memo also calls on the Head of State to cause the commission of inquiry he set up to investigate the slaying of two of their mates on April 28, to publish its findings. They also called for the publication of the results of the Abouem à

Tchoyi-led Commission, which the President put in place to evaluate the state of affairs in all the state universities.

The governance system in the university, they proposed, should be modified. “There is a lot of bad governance in the university system. In the case of the University of Buea in particular, we wish that the sections of Decree No. 93/034 of January 19, 1993, organising the University, relating to the qualification, tenure of office and powers of administrators be strictly implemented,” states the memo.

The students also called for a definition of their status. “Cameroonian students, especially those in the universities, have no defined status. As future leaders of the country, there is need for us to enjoy some preferential treatment in the social and economic domain of the life of students,” they argued.

In another letter addressed to the Vice Chancellor of the University of Buea, UBSU maintained that all courses must be offered in the re-sit exams. “All courses must come up in the forthcoming re-sit examinations scheduled to begin on September 19, 2005,” the letter, which is a declaration from an UBSU August 17 extraordinary general assembly, stated. Noting that results for most of the courses this semester are above 80 per cent, whereas the University regulation stipulates that a course can be offered for re-sit only when 30 per cent of students who registered for it failed, UBSU said the implication is that most of the courses will not be offered. “The students are vehemently against this and are calling on the University administration to immediately put into application the current law signed by the Hon. Minister of Higher Education on May 27.”

UBSU also insisted that a date be fixed for the 2005 Convocation, though the University Senate had earlier decided to cancel it. The letter stated that, “It is quite ridiculous that decisions of the Senate are designed, directed and decided upon by a disguised tribalistic academic aristocratic class.” The students also called for the creation of a joint student administration body. They said they are against the 35th Senate decision because they were not represented in the meeting.

August 30, 2005 at 06:56 AM in [News](#) | [Permalink](#)

Humbling UB Unrest to Rest

By Bouddih Adams

The University of Buea, UB, August 26, organised a press conference to explain the suspension of this year's convocation. The press conference is the greatest thing that has happened in the University in recent times as it helped in defusing the air-tight tension and hold-your-breath situation the University has been going through since the strike.

The press conference was the "Let's-sit-down-and-talk" approach in administration. The hammer and anvil or crush-the-strike approach has proven unworkable. The latter approach might have cost Ejake Mbonda his job as Governor and his movement to the "garage" - shuffling through newspapers in the Ministry.

The Senate of UB, sitting under the chairpersonship of the Vice Chancellor, Dr. Dorothy Limunga Njeuma, took the decision suspending this year's convocation. The suspension of the convocation is glaringly the wage for the students for the strike in April and May that paralysed that institution for one month. This means that there has been no reconciliation. According to the VC and her pages the "self-proclaimed" UBSU leadership had not sincerely apologised for breaching the rules and regulations of UB. There might even be no convocation for the next couple of years, until the bad crop and weeds have been got rid of. This year's graduating students will not have the honour and pride of brandishing their degrees or scrolls to a huge crowd and preening or wrapping their robes as they pose for souvenir photos of that magic moment.

The Unasked Question

During the press conference, speaker after speaker, from the VC to the Deputy VCs to the Registrar, harped, citing and quoting either the law creating UB or the internal rules and regulations to support their case. The unasked question by the time the press conference moderator, Joe Nkelle Mewamu, drew the curtains was that if, as the law has to be respected to the letter, what about the clause in that law that talks about the mandate of the VC?

They also kept repeating that the Senate is a democratic institution which functions like parliament? Which kind of parliament? Ahmadou Ahidjo had a

parliament and we remember in 1972 when he addressed parliament for six hours. And when he was finished, the parliamentarians who had tried out sitting and listening had to clap - more for the vigour of speaking for six hours than for the ideas - and it was declared that his concept of United Republic of Cameroon was adopted by acclamation. Ahidjo's successor has a parliament, but his word overrules. Parliamentary conferences (like Senatorial conferences can be) are used only to endorse the royal "we" used by the Head of State.

Pound Of Flesh

Both Madam Njeuma and the students are bent on having their pound of flesh (apologies to William Shakespeare). The scriptures provide a prayer which can be paraphrased thus: "Oh God, give me the courage to accept the things I cannot change and the strength to change the things I can." Forgiveness, they say, is divine. Vengeance, too. Sometimes vengeance or the "my-pound-of-flesh policy leads people into very devastating extremes, or better still, unforeseen devastating circumstances. The situation has a similarity with the US President shunning the advice not to attack Iraq but to use tact to remove Saddam Hussein from power. But George Mr. Bush turned a deaf ear and went ahead. Today, there is more insecurity in Iraq and, indeed, around the world, than when Saddam Hussein was sitting astride Iraq. Many more people are dying, in fact a hundred fold than when Saddam was in control.

The Buea community will, at least, lose something if the convocation at UB is suspended. During convocation, businesses in Buea make triple, if not quadruple profits. Taximen, off-license operators, restaurants, hotels, and so on usually realise a lot of money during the convocation ceremony. They will have to do with their normal revenue and that which they realise at Christmas and New Year. The University itself will lose a lot. Take that there are 1000 students to graduate and all of them hire the graduation robes from the University at FCFA 10,000 each. That gives the University something like FCFA 10 million each year.

The fact is that no student will graduate with honours. Firstly, because it is the Chancellor of the University (the Minister of Higher Education), who awards the honours, which means excellent academic performance plus good conduct. If the students have been charged with bad conduct, it would be

illogical to award them honours. On the other hand, parents who had to travel long distances carrying fowls, goats, pigs and sundry items to come and fete their children's convocation, will save that money for a more profitable use, maybe, for the same children.

It would be worthwhile to spend hundreds of thousands celebrating the graduation if there were ready jobs, or if the job markets' demand and supply had some equilibrium. But it is known that some of the graduates go home not to roost but to rust, until the devil finds some evil work for their jobless hands. Or some benevolent family member supplies them with capital enough for some petty trade. On the whole and from the undercurrents, there has been no reconciliation. With or without it, both sides should eat humble pie and let the existence of UB rise above all interests.

Are We Together?

August 30, 2005 at 04:20 PM in [Commentary](#) | [Permalink](#)

UB Authorities Hit Hard!

By Pegue Manga

- Violent Riots Were Totally Unprovoked
- UBSU Is a Self-proclaimed Insurgent Students Group
- Accord Between Minister and Students was a Mere Smokescreen
- UB Is Not Exclusively For Anglophones
- Students Not Morally Fit For Convocation

After about three months of crisis, authorities of the University of Buea, UB, Friday, August 26, reacted to issues affecting the institution in a press conference organised by the Vice Chancellor, Dr. Dorothy Limunga Njeuma.

In her preliminary remarks at the event that held in the AMPHI 750 of the University, the Vice Chancellor declared that the accord signed between the Minister of Higher Education, Prof. Jacques Fame Ndong, and the University of Buea Student Union, UBSU, on May 27, "without consultation with the University authorities, could be described as a measure to prevent thousands of innocent students from losing a whole academic year," implying that some of the points in the accord were not binding to the University of Buea.

Asked if she was not flouting the authority of the Minister, Njeuma argued that the Vice Chancellor couldn't overrule the Minister's instructions. "The Minister signed a document with students. The only aspect of that document which the Minister consulted the University is that of food. That is why the Minister sent FCFA 5 million to help the University subsidise food in the University's restaurant," she disclosed. The Vice Chancellor explained that food is now sold at FCFA 100 at the restaurant, meaning that the University pays an extra FCFA 400 to subsidise each plate of food.

Admission of Students

On the University admission procedure, Njeuma said it is based on selection following clearly defined criteria. "Selection is done by a committee headed by the Vice Chancellor, Deputy Vice Chancellors, Registrar, Director of Academic Affairs, all Deans, Vice Deans and Heads of Department." Cut off points for selection of students, Njeuma said, are set by the committee, depending on the quotas proposed by Departments and approved by Senate. Reacting to a suit filed by Barrister Stanislaus Ajong, in the Fako High Court, challenging the University's admission procedure, which the lawyer argues favours Francophones, the Vice Chancellor said UB is a national state-owned institution, open to all who wish to study in English.

"It is not a University for Anglophones, exclusively. Anyone thinking in this narrow sense should remember that the number of Anglophone students in the other state Universities put together, exceed by far, all the students, which the University of Buea can absorb. She revealed that out of the 8676 students registered at UB in the 2004/2005 academic year, 6,905 (80 per cent) are from the English-speaking Regions. "There is, therefore, no foundation in the allegation that admission is done before GCE results are published and that there are more Francophones than Anglophones at the University of Buea," Njeuma stated.

Also reacting to the issue of admission, Dr. Herbert Endeley, the University Registrar, said it is objective, mechanical and open to a minimum of subjectivity. He said there are no standard cut-off points, for the number of intake determines them. "The only cases where we deal with subjectivity are for students who want to do the management sciences and education. We even manipulate them using our hand." Endeley said, "At no time in the admission process of the University, have we admitted 15 per cent of

Francophones or French-speaking students.” Every citizen, he said, has a right to enrol in UB if they qualify. “I think it will be unfair for us to become the divisor of the nation when we know that French-speaking students get their degrees from the USA, UK and elsewhere.”

Student Riots

The University of Buea authorities were very critical of the behaviour of students during the one-month strike that paralysed the institution and resulted in the death of two students and a taxi driver. The Vice Chancellor stated in her preliminary address that the violent students’ riot of April 27, was totally unprovoked. “In broad daylight, and in complete defiance of pleas from senior officials of the University for dialogue, a group of unruly students destroyed over 20 vehicles, the staff canteen, looted food and property in the University restaurant and other structures on campus.” The Vice Chancellor said they threatened to burn any students who would not join them.

Njeuma said the students refused to heed advice and took their insurgency off campus and provoked a violent confrontation with the police. She said the advice she gave from Kigali, Rwanda, to her collaborators at the University and to hierarchy in Yaoundé to close the University was unheeded.

Grievances of the students were not clear. “However, some of the inscriptions on cars, broken louvers and improvised placards could be read: No fees; We want monthly allowances; We want free food; No French 101/102; No classes in the Lycee; Ngoh must go; Jua, we want our FASA money, etc.” She said at the initial stage of the riot, there was no overt reference to the Vice Chancellor, “although it would seem that covertly, she was targeted.”

Chief Dr. John Mangia Ebanja said the impression they got from the first day of the strike was that there was a group of people manipulating the students. “What happened could not have been done without somebody leading it somehow,” he averred. He said when the strike started, the then Governor of the Southwest Region, Thomas Ejake Mbonda, came on campus on April 28 and asked the students to present their problems. “The document they sent to the Governor’s office was not signed because nobody claimed to be leading the strike. In that document they asked questions that

were related to students' life, there was no mention of the Vice Chancellor. This is why we only learnt of the leader in a newspaper, three weeks after," Chief Ebanja said. "The logical explanation for this is that people who were manipulating behind the scene could not do so indefinitely."

The Registrar said when the strike started on April 27, he walked 4000 students from the gate back to campus. "When I met them, they had no single placards. The UB students went on strike for absolutely no reason. They invented the reasons afterwards." He said they refused to dialogue, contrary to statements that it was the University authorities that shunned dialogue.

"They wanted it their way and they were advised not to go to the streets, the consequences of which, we told them, they might get killed. They refused. Some people say they were shot with live bullets. As far as I am concerned, Goliath was killed with a stone. And so stones are just as bad as bullets." Endeley said several policemen were wounded as a result of stones thrown by students. "A student's life must not be valued more than anybody's. Everybody's life is important."

UBSU Attacked

If UB authorities berated the entire student body for what the Vice Chancellor considered uncouth and unruly behaviour, the University of Buea Students Union, UBSU, led by Walters Onekon Angwere, faced greater odium. Njeuma noted "UBSU is a self-proclaimed insurgent student group that would seem to have masterminded the riot and destruction of property on the University campus and in Molyko in April-May 2005."

She said UBSU is termed a self-proclaimed and illegal group because it is not amongst the over 31 student associations and clubs officially approved for the 2004/2005 academic year. "Its ringleaders come from the same Faculty (the Faculty of Social and Management Sciences) and the same Department (Political Science). No democratic elections have ever been conducted to establish their legality in conformity with the rules and tradition of the University of Buea.

The Vice Chancellor suspected that the students are encouraged to commit atrocities by some members of staff of the University of Buea, as well as some individuals and groups outside the University. "A critical look at their so-called by-laws also reveals political overtones."

She said the attitude of UBSU towards her person has been one of absolute defiance, insults, mud-slinging and character assassination, which mimics the attitude of some teaching staff. Njeuma said when UBSU emerged in mid-May 2005, they gave the impression that they were dealing only with authorities above the Vice-Chancellor. They did not address themselves to her. However, their intentions seemed to have been even to do harm to her person. “Hence their insistence that she meet students off-campus, in a mob whose composition could not be determined,” she stated. She said the students have gone as far as writing to the Head of State, Paul Biya, “giving him instructions and imposing demands such as cancellation of fees, institution of allowances to students...”

Njeuma said UBSU went as far as writing to Heads of Departments, asking them to collect FCFA 2000 from every student at the beginning of the academic year. “These are people who are asking the government to cancel registration fees, yet they want to tax the students.”

Endeley said he did not know anywhere on earth where students get to a school and tell the administrators how the school should be run. “Unfortunately, no member of the so-called UBSU is older than any member of staff of this institution.”

UBSU Not A Better Structure

In his intervention, Prof. Emmanuel Chia, Deputy Vice Chancellor in charge of Research and Cooperation, said, “UBSU, that the students want to impose on the University, is not a better structure than what we have. We have Faculty associations elected by students. In these associations, we have Faculty executives.”

Chia said out of the associations the Presidents elect the President of Presidents. He said this is to ensure that every Faculty is equitably represented, failing which the Faculty of Social and Management Sciences could easily grab all the positions in the UBSU. “UBSU has to review its constitution to take into consideration the minority faculties. What UBSU has submitted so far, does not, in my opinion, meet this worry of full representation.”

Re-sit

Talking about re-sit examinations, Chia said what the French call *deuxieme session* (second session) does not obtain in English-speaking universities. "This second session is very strange and peculiar to other universities in this country. It is up to our students to choose. But if you choose an Anglo-Saxon university, then know that you cannot eat your cake and have it. If we, parents, understand it and make our children understand, they would not be coming here to ask questions," Chia stated. Prof. Vincent Titanji, Deputy Vice Chancellor in charge of Teaching, said the end point of re-sit is to recover people who have failed, make it in the ordinary exams. "It is not a matter for chest beating. Students who are adept at re-sit fail more and more," he said.

The strategy of UB has been to adopt pedagogic approaches that enhance output and excellence. The number of years students take to get a degree in UB, he argued, is comparatively shorter.

Njeuma said organising re-sits for all the 800 courses offered in the University, would be costly and would take at least three months. She said teachers would have to be paid for setting, invigilating and marking re-sit exams, since it is not provided for in the text. "Students come to the University of Buea to pass their examinations, not to fail. The pass rate at the University of Buea this year, was up to 78 per cent.

No Convocation

The Vice Chancellor reiterated the decision of the University Senate to cancel this year's convocation. She said convocation has moral as well as academic aspects. "In the present case, the students threw out their teachers and student colleagues out of class. In some cases, teachers who resisted were physically carried out. Would you present such students to the world as being worthy of character?" Njeuma asked reporters.

Prof. Titanji asserted that the Senate has the prerogative to decide when and if they would organise the convocation. "The lecturers have exercised this prerogative. It is purely an academic and pedagogic strategy that when children under training do err, they must be corrected. So to ask a hypothetical question on this exercise is to show a bit of bad faith," Titanji declared.

Conclusion

Many actors were responsible for attempting to end the strike in the University of Buea, including the mayor of Buea, the Minister of Higher Education, Jacques Fame Ndongo, and particularly the revived student union, the UBSU. While the UBSU leaders failed to bring about substantial changes in the students' predicament during the negotiations for a settlement of the strike, they nevertheless succeeded in winning a number of important concessions.

Strikingly, the university authorities was reluctant to recognise the UBSU even after the settlement of the strike. Of course, such a recognition would have signified a new democratic opening in the prevailing authoritarian governance of the university.

As a matter of fact, the UBSU *ab initio* became the bête noire to the administration, and the Vice Chancellor did not mince words at lambasting the students as being insolent and poorly behaved. Knowing the students had won the war, the administration went ahead to pull another rug below the students by cancelling the convocation ceremony on grounds the students had not showed enough proof of being worthy in character as one of the tenets enshrined in the graduation 'bible'. The next chapter focuses on one of the greatest forces which led to the success of the students strike in the University of Buea, the civil society.

Civil Society Actors Weigh in on the University Strike

Introduction

The university does not only serve as an arena within which societal issues are refracted, but given the prevalence of youth political, social and economic cultures, it represents a recruiting ground for different causes. Given the centrality of the university therefore in social mobilisation, civil societies often stake competing claims on the interests of the university student population. The occurrence of student protests therefore presents a prime opportunity for civil society actors to side with or against student movements, while understanding the possible political fallout of their different positions.

What is important here is the prism through which each civil society actor perceived the crisis in the university system through their own organisational lenses. While some saw it as reflective of broader problems which affect the corps of lecturers, others saw it as an Anglophone problem, while it was also perceived by some through North West Region and South West Region dichotomies. Conspicuously silent, even in the event of loss of life, were the many political parties in Cameroon which present themselves as advocates for the respect of the democratic rule of law. These issues are brought out here following 'hot meetings' that were held between the staff of the University of Buea, the university of Buea administration and the Minister of Higher Education. The exchanges between the staff from different regions as well as the Vice Chancellor pointed at regionalism which had touched on the fabric of the University of Buea.

In Cameroon the challenge of civil society has been to create awareness in citizens that will encourage them to take responsibility for their individual and collective destinies (Mbuagbo and Akoko 2004). Unfortunately the liberties of citizens as found in the constitution have remained so far a dead letter. Civil society is fractured, and the flavour of its vibrancy has gone sour. In any ordinary sense civil society deals with day-to-day operations of livelihood and one should be able to talk of civil society when it has an impact on the society; if not it should be left out. However, civil society has

occasioned endless disputes over definitions and its study in Africa has made great strides (Comaroff and Comaroff 1999; Kasfir 1998; Siteo 1998; Osaghae 1994). Some scholars have seen civil society in terms of advancing democracy and disciplining the state to ensure that citizen interest is taken seriously and greater civil and political participation is fostered (Carothers 2000). Others have conceived of civil society as a critical element of democratisation, arguing that the current failure of the process of democratisation in Africa hinges in part on the failure of states to respond to the pressing demands of their people (Fatten Jr. 1995). Yet others see civil society as more or less imaginary: 'outside of the sociological, historical and cultural events of its imagination, the existence or non-existence of civil society is not significant' (Tester 1992). Still others see civil society as the process by which society seeks to breach and counteract the simultaneous 'totalisation' unleashed by the state (Bayart 1989). Finally others simply define civil society as 'new spaces for communication and discussion over which the state have no control' (Monga 1998).

Synes Communiqué on the UB Crisis

The right to strike is a tenet of democracy and provided for in the constitution of our country. How a strike is executed is also of essence. How a strike action is contained or managed by the various authorities is a very crucial factors which contributes to the final outcome of the strike action.



UB Students and Security Forces Face Each Other

With the UB students' strike action it was clear that there was no responsible and effective leadership, which should have directed the strike action and with whom authorities would have dialogued as is the case with the University of Yaounde I - a consequence of the absence of an independent student union with a credible leadership.

The current compartmentalised, dependent and ineffective faculty association are no near-substitutes for a true and independent students' union.

In any student strike action, which overflows in an attempt to carry its grievances to any given authority, the classic approach has been for the forces of law and order to sandwich the students and to pre-empt any excesses.

In the case of Buea, the police chose to incite violence by:

- i) throwing teargas;
- ii) bludgeoning students;
- iii) breaking into students' residences at night and brutalising them;
- iv) looting students' property (phones, TVs, money etc.)

Since violence breeds violence, the strike action degenerated into some university property being seriously damaged, students' residences being seriously damaged and many students brutalised and hospitalised, with the tragic deaths of at least two students, and culminating in the closure of the University of Buea.

Syns Buea by the communiqué hereby:

- 1) Condemns all forms of violence;
- 2) Condemns the wanton and unnecessary destruction of University property;
- 3) Urges for a proper management of student crises by the authorities that be whenever any arises;
- 4) Demands that the students' grievances be addressed objectively through dialogue and finally;
- 5) Demands an independent investigation into the unfortunate events of the UB-students' strike action.

Syns UB is ready and willing to contribute positively towards diffusing the sour atmosphere and restoring serenity.

Done in Buea Friday 29/04/05

Dr. Fonyam J. President

May 03, 2005 at 09:31 AM in [News](#), [Special Report: The University of Buea Crisis](#) | [Permalink](#)

Comments

I am surprised that the communiqué from SYNES is like that from persons sitting on the fence. In situations like these, we need to call a ‘spade a spade’, pronounce ‘black black’, and speak the truth, rather than gambling and veiling the truth so that tomorrow, you too can be called up for the ‘gomboo’. Fonyam and SYNES should all curl up like rats they are, and leave all this rhetoric.

Posted by: [Bryce](#) | May 3, 2005 12:22 PM

Bryce, I understand your disillusion. However I know what synes has been doing for all these years and I know Dr. Fonyam enough to objectively say here that he and synes are not allies of Njeuma and secondly these are individuals who have been for over the years calling on a reform and transformation of the system in UB and elsewhere. Of course this communiqué would be stupid if it were to call for an outright radical support of the student’s strike. Guys read within the lines. The communiqué is objective, very direct in content and pure in intentions.

Posted by: [Mike](#) | May 3, 2005 01:30 PM

Dear Dr. Fonyam, I don’t want to discredit your (SYNES) communiqué but I wonder aloud why it did not unequivocally condemn the actions of the police, particularly the killings. Was this a slip or simply some tactics not to flare tempers? Dear Dr., you know better than I do that “communiqués” and “commissions of inquiry” serve or change nothing in Cameroon. They come and go everyday leaving no imprints. And instead of just being open about proper management style, go ahead and suggest one. Tell the UB administration to start a veritable student union or face a more bloody strike in future because students now understand they could be shot and killed.

Notwithstanding, you have made your voice heard, though not by all and not enough.

Posted by: [Edwin Ndum](#) | May 3, 2005 02:22 PM

Mike... Mike...Mike. how many times did I call you? We have trusted people like this and where did it lead us. Let Dr Fonyam not use his cracked voice to make you support his views. I know what “Gombo” does. When SDF parliamentarians are deliberating on a Bill in the National Assembly the ambiance is promising due to their “objective” views but dès que le “Gombo” tombe, the National assembly is as quiet as a grave yard. Fonyam has less than these parliamentarians. He needs to work hard in the opposite camp to become a government ally. Shine your eyes mike, shine your eyes!!!

Posted by: [Endale](#) | May 3, 2005 02:51 PM

We are still riding in a ‘vehicle’ designed by Ahidjo and finished by Biya. These two men have taken 10-16 million people on a joy ride without end. There are those who still think:- wow, what a comfortable ride! And others who say:- enough is enough and disembark And still others who feel:- well let’s wait and see ... “maybe things go better ...” etc. That is the human experience ...Only time will tell what is good for the majority of our people - death by gendarme bullets or life in a free, non-communist system where institutions of higher learning are not ‘owned’ by the so-called Central Politburo. Those who have eyes can see and those who have ears, do they really hear? Blessings

Posted by: [Wanaku](#) | May 4, 2005 02:11 PM

Mike, I know your type. When you sound the way you do, it’s but obvious that you’re one those either disguising or motivated to breed confusion in this forum. You state, ‘Of course this communiqué would be stupid if it were to call for an outright radical support of the student’s strike. Guys read within the lines. The communiqué is objective, very direct in content and pure in intentions’. I see you are carried away by the nicety of the phraseology of public speeches in Cameroon. Maybe you need an extra pair of eyes to use in decoding such utterances by Cameroonian public

figures. When you make a declaration that 'The communiqué is objective, very direct in content and pure in intentions', I wonder the extent of your horizons.

Mike, I'm glad you said, you know the author of that communiqué'. Get him cornered somewhere and find out from him as a trusted friend or as a.... and I promise you, he'll tell you where he's actually heading to. Don't be deceived by the troughs and crests of the speeches made by Cameroon officials. They are hardly so good for what they claim. I'd rather you go through this communiqué 10x before making your declarations.

SCNC Condemns Killing Of UB Students

By Chris Mbunwe

The National Vice Chairman of the Southern Cameroons National Council, SCNC, Nfor Ngala Nfor, has issued a press release condemning the recent killing of two students of the University Of Buea, following the on-going strike action in the state universities. Anti-riot police opened fire on demonstrating students of University of Buea leaving two dead; Gilbert Nforlem (M.Sc.) and Aloysius Abuoam (B.Ed.).

The release, dated May 2, signed by Nfor Nfor, says having carried out such criminal acts, the forces of occupation of La République du Cameroun wanted to erase evidence of used live bullets on unarmed peaceful demonstrators by stealing the corpses away from the Buea District Hospital mortuary. "As they failed in Bamenda in March 1992, so did they this time around in Buea, thanks to the vigilant patriots." The SCNC release states that when the students of the University of Buea, on April 27, resolved to join their colleagues of the University of Yaounde I who had been on strike, they pledged to make it peaceful for the purpose of demanding for improved conditions of effective learning. According to SCNC investigations, "as soon as they started the peaceful demonstration, troops were brought in and the students, faithful to their commitment to peacefully make their grievances known to the authorities, told the police that they were not out for violent demonstration. But calm was soon turned into violence when a mixed contingent of gendarmes and police with reinforcement from Douala arrived in Buea and blocked the peaceful demonstrators". Not interested in any dialogue of words, the release says, "as masters of dialogue of the graveyard" the mixed contingent used teargas, batons, boots and finally live bullets to

disperse the students. What puzzles the SCNC is why a strike that started in Yaounde I, assisted by students of Yaounde II for more than a week with the Minister of Higher Education, Fame Ndong, addressing students under rain, went on rather peacefully, but in Buea two students had to die. “How is it that while in Yaounde the striking students went out and were received by Prime Minister Ephraim Inoni, but in Buea stepping out of campus was a criminal act, now used by authorities to justify the killings?” “It is remarkable that while Mr. Inoni, as a loyal and faithful servant, acted as a shock absorber to protect the good image of his master, the Southwest Governor, Thomas Ejake Mbonda, had no time and patience with the protesting Anglophone students,” the release notes. The right to peaceful strike, the release states, is protected by international law. According to Nfor Nfor, the authoritarian laws of the Yaounde regime have endorsed the use of lethal weapons on any one or given the right to deprive any one of his life to the whims and caprices of any individual. The release recalls the history of carnage carried out by the forces of law and order in Southern Cameroons including the state of emergency in Bamenda, Operation Dorade in the southern part of Southern Cameroons, torture and loss of eyes and limbs during the struggle for the creation of the GCE Board, amongst others. Nfor Nfor says all these evil acts against Southern Cameroonians carry one message - annex and occupy Southern Cameroons so that they lose their inalienable rights as free citizens. The release concludes by calling on all Southern Cameroonians and the international community to take note of the fact that despite SCNC’s peaceful approach to its legitimate exercise of its “rights to self-determination, La République du Cameroun is doing everything possible to provoke a crisis situation in order to carry out genocide against the law abiding people of Southern Cameroons.

Trauma Centre Calls For Immediate Trial of Students’ Killers

By Clovis Attah

The Director of the Yaounde-based anti-torture organisation, the Trauma Centre, Peter Kumche, has called for the trial of the policemen who tortured and killed striking students of the University of Buea recently. In an interview granted The Post in Yaounde, Kumche said the shooting to death of two unarmed students has no justification, as the perpetrators of the crime were acting in flagrant contravention of both national and international law.

“It is illegal by Cameroonian law for anti-riot police to carry live ammunition,” Kumche said. “The anti-riot police were not supposed to have been carrying live ammunition in the first place.

The fact that they did presupposes that the police had premeditated employing violent means to break up the students’ demonstration. He said even if the police were legally allowed to carry live ammunition, basic moral and human rights tenets require that they do not use firearms on unarmed people.

These students were unarmed and demonstrating peacefully when police opened fire on them. Two of the students died instantly. One of them was even shot on the back of the head, a fact which dismisses any possibility that the person who opened fire was acting in self-defence,” Kumche said. He said the authorities should immediately arrest and try the perpetrators of the violent crime.

He said delaying in bringing the perpetrators of the act to book would send a wrong signal to the police that they could act with impunity. “More atrocities could be committed by the police if firm and decisive deterrent measures are not taken immediately. One of the most effective deterrent measures would be the immediate and speedy trial of those who killed those unarmed students,” Kumche said. He said those to be tried should be along the entire chain of command from the official who authorised the police officers to carry live bullets, through the person who gave instructions for them to open fire on unarmed demonstrators to the persons who actually killed the students.

He said the police who shot at the students could not be exculpated even if they were only carrying out instructions. “Police should know that they are personally responsible for their actions, even if they were following instructions.

They are bound by law to carry out only reasonable instructions. That is a fundamental principle in international law,” Kumche said. Reminded that the government has already instituted a commission of inquiry to look into the incident, the Director of the Trauma Centre said he was not impressed.

He said police had been caught in flagrant perpetration of a felony. “It is already established that a grave crime has been committed. The perpetrators should be brought to book immediately. Any commission of enquiry would only be looking at the bigger picture so that certain factors that might have

created the atmosphere for such an incident to occur could be identified and recommendations made.

But the setting up of that commission of enquiry should not preclude the immediate trial of the perpetrators of the killings,” Kumche said. He equally condemned, in strong terms, the atrocities the police committed in the students’ residential areas in Molyko, Buea.

He said police broke into students’ hostels destroying property, confiscating money and looting other property. He said they are also investigating allegations of rape of several female students. He said the indiscriminate and extrajudicial punishment of students using violent methods is simply unacceptable.

“This is a state of law and not a jungle. Police should not go around breaking down doors, looting and raping students as if they were vandals. They were trained to protect life and property and not to take away lives and destroy property.

All those responsible for these reprehensible acts should be brought to book,” he said. The Director of the Trauma Centre also recalled the spate of killings across the country by policemen in the last couple of months. He said that in all of these cases, the authorities have only meted out administrative sanctions. “Murder is a felony. Police officers who commit murder should be dragged to court and given a fair trial. Limiting punishment for murder by a policeman to a three-month administrative suspension makes a mockery of justice and the law,” Kumche said.

Politicians Speak On Varsity Strike

Compiled by Mirabel Azanghe Tandafor

Like every other human being, I learnt what is happening in our state universities with a lot of sadness. But like a mother, I give all my maternal and affectionate love to these courageous youths who are fighting to call the attention of the state to their situation. President Biya might have taken all school children as his ‘little darlings’, but those into whose hands the mission of catering for our school children, has been entrusted, are negligent. These people are supposed to listen to the disparate children keenly and solve their problems promptly. There is a special language to use; and not that of politicians, which is often repressive and less convincing. They shouldn’t have left the students to get to this level before a reaction. The children

themselves started subtly so as not to be taken as mad people. But no immediate action was taken. I don't blame them for going 'mad' because the problem really exists. There is no denying it.

Our leaders should change. You can't be talking about democracy in a country without giving everyone the opportunity to exercise it. So, they should look into the problems of our school children. Barrister Alice Nkom

MANIDEM For The Striking Students

At the time when Les Grand Ambitions is turning out to be an inexplicable degradation of the living conditions of the masses, we of the MANIDEM congratulate the University Students on what they are doing. Looking at what the customers of CAMPOST, Probationary Teachers, Kribi Inhabitants and retired workers of CAMRAIL, just to name a few, did to draw attention to their problems, it can be said that in our country, authorities prefer only the hard way...

And thus, Cameroonians have to organise themselves, create structures of collective action to defend their rights. There is no other way out in a regime that prefers to see us in misery.

MANIDEM denounces this approach. MANIDEM calls on all media organs to be objective in the coverage of the strikes, and should, through their medium invite the authorities of the country to come to the aid of students. Students have the right. Their grievances are just and legitimate. MANIDEM defends, without reservations, the striking students. MANIDEM would always be with those who fight for their rights.

Cameroon's University System In Search Of Its Soul

Dr. Ernest L. Molua: University of Buea

The events of the past week, with students of the University of Yaounde I emaciating themselves to pass home a message to the Education authorities of the land, and the students of the University of Buea taking onto the streets in a warfare against the Provincial and University authorities, begs for honest pondering.

At the University of Buea, UB, rampaging students called for better living conditions and a congenial study environment that bespeaks a modern university setting. The demand for microphones in lecture halls, toilets, review of courses programmed for September and re-sit examinations are a few items in the long shopping list of demands.

We must condemn in the strongest terms possible the destruction of public property by the UB students. We must equally condemn the uncivilised methods they employed in conveying their grievances. And above all, we must denounce the disgraceful and uncalled for commando-style intervention by the police that led to the killing, beating, looting and raping of students in Buea. Hypotheses have been propounded to explain the unfolding crisis in Cameroon's universities. Some people see the hidden hands of members of the political opposition. In the case of Buea, some pundits hypothesize on the regional and ethnic divide within the Anglophone community.

Others point to the simmering tension between potential power usurpers wanting to unseat the reformist Anglophone Rector of Yaounde I and the Vice-Chancellor of the University of Buea. If the latter is true, then such diabolic lacerations on the workings of the Cameroon university system at this juncture should be condemned loud and clear. It is evidently clear that the managerial skills of Prof. Sammy Chumbow and Dr. Dorothy Njeuma are exemplary in a land void of patriots, visionary and determined leaders. The few years Chumbow has put in reshaping the University of Yaounde I and Dr. Njeuma in tending the University of Buea into an African centre of excellence speaks volumes of the possibilities that lie ahead for Cameroon's universities given the extent to which they have lifted the barometer of personnel and resource management. In the case of the University of Buea, you will doff your hat for Dr. Njeuma in acknowledging that this institution operates with less than half of its yearly state subvention.

However, there is a moral challenge to understand the minds of our students in Buea. Had they not rioted and gone public, the standoff that led to the death of our Cameroonian compatriots, would not have occurred. What came as a surprise to some authorities, to me was merely the icing on the cake baked in an oven of an ever widening gap between the "haves" and the "have-nots". That student in UB could walk into lecture rooms and throw their professors out, or that they could even chase their Deans and Heads of Departments out of their offices through the windows, speaks volumes of the young men that we train. There is no doubt that these are actions of angry young people drowning in deep inner feelings of unhappiness and hopelessness in the Cameroon economic landscape.

Rather than mere lip service and promises, it is thus time for real engagement to find out the inner hell of these youths who generally tear

down end of semester result posters on notice boards around the campus. These are perennially angry people who have just exploded because they cannot take it anymore. For those who dispute this assertion they are the “high-ups” shielded from the daily dehumanising grind of Cameroonians who see no light at the end of the tunnel in their toil for a decent living. The actions on April 27 and 28, 2005 of students that I teach, has sent me into my study wondering where I have failed as a mentor. The prevailing economic apartheid in the country marshalled by men who have no feelings on the sufferings of humanity, cannot alone explain the despicable actions of my lads. Society watchers will attest that the generational gap and the overlooking of the potentials of Cameroon youths have created a tense atmosphere where the young look at the old with suspicion. Perhaps, that is why without remorse they could throw their Professors out through the windows.

What are the measures to appease an educated, angry adult? Some labour economists opine that the retirement age in Cameroon should be lowered to 60 for men and 55 for women, so that some civil service perennials should give way to more dynamic trained Cameroonians. This would allow the perennials to move on to other things amongst which is investing their accumulated knowledge and savings in job and money creation enterprises. I may buy this assertion since young men commonly lack the capital and collateral to garner resources to engage in private self-employment.

This argument may fly in the face of policy makers who rant that Cameroon youths should be thinking of self-employment. On the contrary, there should be a policy reversal where those who have accumulated resources should retire early and move on to private engagements, create wealth and money whose supply in the economy would unleash the required multiplier effects. How plausible that argument enlightens the current dispensation of rampaging angry youths is explained by the stalemate at the University of Yaounde I, whose students’ actions have shown that they cannot be bribed by mere promises of 5 billion FCFA which could buy all the microphones and desks they need in lecture halls and dig all the toilets they need.

The interpretation is that curing the hopelessness is worth more than 5 billion FCFA. The message is that the rampaging youths want a secure future, and would want soonest to be part of the work force that shapes that future. This, to me, is the culprit of the university crisis. For men of vision

and foresight, this is the Lucifer that has been unleashed, and that galvanised young men at the University of Buea to trail behind the rioting ringleaders without asking questions. And the antidote is beyond the campuses of Cameroon's universities. It is lying fallow in the briefcases of higher powers.

Reaction To SWELA Secretary General's Communiqué On UB Strike

By Ferdinand Asapngu, Kumba Urban Council Chairman

I listened to the SWELA Secretary General's communiqué over CRTV Radio on the Buea University student's protest, and I think the pronouncements were indeed unfortunate and misleading. Students are protesting for better conditions of learning and living. This started with the University of Yaounde 1. The Head of State acknowledged the grievances and doled out FCFA 2.4 billion to ameliorate their situation. The Minister of Higher Education also acknowledged the grievances and even stayed in the rain to talk to and appease the students. This same protest spilled over the University of Buea. Due to poor crisis management skills of the University authorities and Southwest Administration, the situation escalated to its present situation. The SWELA Secretary General, himself a teacher and parent, instead of summoning SWELANS to Buea to listen to and counsel the students, chose to gather his kind to Mundemba. SWELA is said to be apolitical and, if actually so, how does he reconcile SWELA with the pronouncements he made inciting and fanning ethnic division.

Furthermore, he mentioned the burning down of the Kumba Women's Centre and the house of Hon. Itoe, which buildings a Southwester from Manyemen, not belonging to the opposition, did confess in Kumba that he was responsible for the destruction. This is how people like you feed the Head of State with falsehood and misdirect his actions, thereby giving the population a wrong impression of government action. I know this is aimed at getting an appointment so desperately needed by the S.G of SWELA.

But, by this act of incitement and fanning of ethnic tension and division, it will be dangerous and risky to give such a person any administrative position. His term as SWELA boss is fast running out and instead of contemplating on what should be recorded as his achievements as SWELA boss, he is rather engaged in trading falsehood and incitement.

As a SWELAN myself, I regret where he is leading SWELA to in this age of globalisation. Whereas people are coming together, he is inciting ethnic

division - a thing the Head of State is vehemently against. Is this not an exhibition of intellectual dishonesty on the part of the SWELA SG? Achidi Achu, Peter Mafany Musonge and, now, Chief Ephraim Inoni, are all Cameroonians appointed on their individual merits by the Head of State to serve Cameroonians. How come the SWELA SG wants to sectorally stigmatise them?

We should by now learn to speak the truth and identify issues on their merits, and allow a free hand to Cameroonians appointed to posts of responsibility to exhibit their talents for the good of their fellow citizens. The Buea University escalated due to poor crisis management skills adopted by those responsible for the maintenance of law and order. Citizens from other Regions also live in Yaounde. So, this doctrine of ethnicism that the SWELA boss is trying to sow in the Region is bad.

Ferdinand Asapngu Kumba Urban Council Chairman

UB Authorities Failed In Their Assignment- Alumni President

By Nana Wilson



Justin Ayuk, National President, University of Buea Alumni Association, has blamed the current happenings in the University of Buea on poor management tactics. According to him; “The problem is not the strike itself but the management of the crisis.” He faulted the powers that be in the University of Buea for not taking their responsibilities promptly. He prescribed dialogue between the UB administration and the students.

He also called on the students to express moderation in their actions. He chatted online with The Post's Walter Wilson Nana. Excerpts:

The Post: As the National President of the UB Alumni Association, what is your reading of the current happenings in the University of Buea?

Justin Ayuk: It is rather unfortunate that we find ourselves where we are today with respect to the strike action that students started last April 27. From the look of things, the problem is not the strike itself but the management of the crisis.

We all understand that it is not proper to flog a crying child. If you do, the child will cry the more. I think we have passed the age where repressive methods were employed to resolve human conflict.

If you look at how the strike was managed in the University of Yaounde I, you will not hesitate to give credit to the Minister of Higher Education. In Buea, the authorities failed in their assignment.

The government for some time now, has made efforts to improve in many domains. Those to whom power has been delegated, I think should make this task easier rather than taking decisions that make things more difficult.

A demonstration by students is an invitation to treat in the case where they feel neglected. It was necessary to listen and talk to them and there would be no demonstrators. The happenings of Thursday, May 5, made matters worse. Till date I cannot understand why water was sprayed on mourning students.

Look at the damage that Buea has suffered from the tyres and whatever that was burnt on the road, a road that everybody wanted. I am afraid in a few years all those areas that experienced the burning will start giving way.

The students are asking for more toilets on the campus, better quality food at the UB restaurant, all courses should be offered for re-sits and the scrapping of FCFA 50,000, which is only a registration fee. Do you find these grievances genuine? What I see here is the absence of dialogue between the administration and the students. The school administration has to look for a forum in which students can be informed about certain things. The students did not ask more than what they should have.

I understand some students have not bothered to know the type of fees they pay. Your registration fee gives you that student status. Students should not forget that the government pays their tuition fees. Most of our parents who are today's decision makers, studied on scholarships.

Hence, they may not understand the hardship that students face. The students too, may not understand the financial difficulties that our government is facing. Both parties should understand that times have changed and with the current population of students and the number of universities, what we had yesterday may not apply today. I may not understand the difficulties that the university authorities face to organise re-sit exams. If not, the students are not wrong to demand for all courses to be offered in the re-sit, particularly, final year courses. I think the other demands like toilets, water, and restaurant problems are basic necessities and should be solved.

The students also hold that there is no effective communication channel between them and the UB authorities. What is your reaction to that? It is absolutely necessary that the administration communicates with the students. Most of the members of the University of Buea administration studied abroad; either for undergraduate or post graduate degree programs, in universities that had student unions. An Anglo-Saxon university is not complete without a student union. However, a student union will only function properly if politicians allow it to function as such.

In your opinion, what should be done in the current stalemate, considering that the UB authorities have suspended classes indefinitely? I think a forum for dialogue should be open. I understand it may be difficult to identify those who could stand for the students even if the University authorities are willing and open for dialogue. The strike was an overflow of what was in Yaounde I. I tried to find out if there is a constituted group like it was in 1995 but the result has not been positive. If there is no constituted group then with the intimidations I think it may not be easy. Has your association approached the UB authorities since the strike started in UB? If yes, what have been the fall-out of your discussions? If not, why? We had a meeting in Buea, Monday, May 9, in relation to the happenings, in which I participated by phone. However, attempts made by the Vice President and Scribe to meet the authorities and discuss the possibilities of mediating in this crisis failed.

They could not talk to any of the UB authorities. We are not dampened in spirits. We have resolved to approach the UB authorities with the proposals we have in mind.

What are the proposals?

What is important now is to get the students back to the classrooms. By the time we get to the facts of the strike, we shall stand a better chance to make concrete proposals to avoid future occurrences.

And to the students?

I will appeal to the students to start packing their bags for school. We regret what has happened. Everything cannot come to a halt. There must be a compromise for continuity. I would like to let you know that violence has never paid off.

You should be cautious anywhere and anytime that you have a problem. Avoid violence even if you are provoked. The government has disbursed money to the various universities to resolve some of the problems the students forwarded.

However, any student who has any important information that can help solve this problem should write to: ubaac@yahoogroups.com. All information will be treated confidentially.

The University is only a sub-system of Cameroon's inefficient societal framework. Why are Yaounde 1 & UB on Strike?

By Canute Tangwa

Because the Cameroon government and university authorities were waiting for the barbarians! Aside: *Waiting For The Barbarians* is the title of a poem written by the Greek poet CP Cavafy. Once upon a time the celebrated Nigerian journalist, Ray Ekpu, used Cavafy's strong poetic and poignant lines to capture vividly the posture and wait-and-see attitude of those who could make or mar in Nigerian varsities. And now students of the Universities of Yaounde I and Buea are on the rampage, clamouring for a number of changes in the university system.

They have posted up a list of grievances that legislators, government and varsity authorities must address. Before the students took to the streets what was the atmosphere?

Paraphrase: Why isn't anything happening in our varsities? Why do legislators, government officials, varsity authorities sit there without

legislating on student affairs, without taking pro-student decisions, without attending to student problems?

Answer: Because the barbarians are coming today.

Question: What laws can our legislators make now? What decisions can government and varsity authorities take now?

Answer: Once the barbarians are here, they will pass laws and take decisions.

Question: Why don't our distinguished orators come forward as usual, to make their speeches, say what they have to say?

Answer: Because the barbarians are coming today and they are bored by rhetoric and public speaking.

Question: Why this sudden restlessness, this confusion?

Answer: Because night has fallen and the barbarians have not come.

Question: And what is going to happen to us without the barbarians?

Answer: They were, those people, a kind of solution.

Paradoxically, the first salvo came from the Registrar of the University of Buea, Dr. Herbert Nganjo Endeley who faced the music in the absence of the Vice Chancellor, Dr. Dorothy Limunga Njeuma.

He struck the nail on the head when he said in *The Post* of April 29, 2005 (No. 0662): "Every student like every human being has grievances... One of the things all of us pray for is (sic) that we should have a university campus; that we should be able to lodge about 60-70 per cent of our students on campus.

Then we can give them a university culture. We cannot run a university system where 80-90 per cent of the students live in the streets. It does not work. That is why we are having the kind of reaction we are having right now...

If it were a normal university campus, they would have a strike but they would not go to the streets, because their homes would belong in the campus".

Conclusion: Informed minds had already seen ominous clouds gathering. This time, legislators, government and university authorities would be hard-pressed to say that students in our temples of learning were politically manipulated.

A university culture is a package. Giving students a university culture entails an overhaul of the present university system. That is what it means from whatever angle you look at it.

EDITORIAL: Ferment On Campuses: Symptoms of Deep-seated Malaise

University students are angry. Very angry. Their anger erupted recently when they staged a series of strikes throughout the State Universities. During the strikes, students reeled a litany of grievances:



Aftermath of Student-Police Confrontation in Buea

indifferent University authorities, dilapidated infrastructure, obsolete libraries, no toilet facilities, more classrooms to accommodate the burgeoning student population, cronyism in appointing officials, microphones and speakers in the usually jammed lecture halls to enable students follow lectures- and much more. In short, the students complain that they are studying under appalling conditions. All they wanted, they said, were better conditions and an enabling environment under which they could live and study.

To counter the strikes, government sent out armed-to-teeth troops. To be sure, that was necessary to prevent the seething students from destroying property. The troops came with water cannons and tear gas and guns. Then, they went berserk. They brutalised, molested and arrested some students. Also - tragically - they shot and killed two apparently harmless students in the University of Buea.

From the beginning, it was clear that the students intended to be non-violent. They said so and waved green leaves (a symbol of peace). They also

carried along books by Martin Luther King Jnr, indicating that they were votaries of the legendary African American civil rights non-violent activist. So, if the situation degenerated, there is no doubt that it was because the reckless and trigger-happy troops went loose. Inexplicably, they absconded from their peacekeeping assignment, went on a rampage, cracking skulls and engaging in an orgy of looting and raping.

Even those who were not remotely connected to the strike were not spared. A hapless woman struggling to make ends meet by selling food in a nearby bar was bashed until blood oozed from her skull.

The President, it is reported, has ordered an enquiry into the sad events that led to the slaying of two students. However, many observers are sceptical, as they fear that the government might as well just be buying time for the sting to wear off.

That would be regrettable, as life is precious and the wanton manner in which they were killed should be subject to a thorough investigation, leading to severe sanctions for those found guilty.

In choosing members of the commission, utmost care must be taken to ensure that members can boast of irreproachable credentials, as persons of unimpeachable integrity. Furthermore, while the commission goes underway, those who fired the shots and who can easily be identified, should be given exemplary sanctions as a deterrent for those who, in future, might be tempted to act with such callousness. Otherwise, it will be clear that the government gives a hoot about the loss of ordinary lives.

Officers in arms should be given the message that, in a State of law, no one has the right to take away another's life. They should be told, here and now, that the era of impunity is over and that such acts of barbarity and recklessness will fetch commensurate punishment for those ordered, as well as those who executed the dastardly act. Students were provocative. True. But that is the nature of strikes. Tempers sometimes run riot. Yet, it is the duty of the forces of law and order to calm any attendant tension with less lethal weapons. To have acted otherwise was sheer brutality.

Admittedly, some of the grievances might have sounded outrageous. But with open and sincere dialogue, the worst could have been averted. In addressing the students in Buea, the Registrar conceded that some of their grievances were legitimate. This, to an extent, mollified the restive students. In handling the confrontation, the Registrar called on the troops to evacuate

the campus, otherwise their presence could inflame and aggravate the situation.

The fact that there was no Student Union aggravated the crisis because, even if the authorities had so desired, there would have been no leaders to talk to. Paradoxically, by stifling the functioning of Student Unions, the authorities sowed the seeds for the spontaneous outpouring of the students' ire and pent-up emotions.

May 03, 2005 at 12:28 PM in [Editorial](#) | [Permalink](#)

‘Creating UB Was Government Smokescreen to Join Commonwealth’

Interviewed By Charly Ndi Chia, Pegue Manga & Effa Tambenkongho



Barrister Charles Achaleke Taku, prominent human rights lawyer and Lead Counsel at the United Nations International Criminal Tribunal for Rwanda in Arusha-Tanzania, was recently in Buea, en route to Sierra Leone, on a new posting. He witnessed the University of Buea students' strike that left two dead and thinks that government designed the fracas for political motives.

The Post: Tell us this bit about you, leaving Arusha for Freetown in Sierra Leone. Is it a permanent placement, or just a temporary mission?

Barrister Charles Taku: For the past almost five years I have been lead counsel at the United Nations International Criminal Tribunal for Rwanda in Arusha in Tanzania.

That assignment is still on. Suddenly, I was also appointed as one of the lead counsel for the trial of the leaders of the Revolutionary United Front, RUF, in the United Nations Special Court for Seirra Leone. It is a sort of dual assignment at the UN.

What is your brief and how long are you going to be there for?

We do not really know. No one can know for sure. These are cases that are allegations of serious violation of international humanitarian law and the witnesses are found all over the national territory of Seirra Leone, neighbouring countries and beyond.

So we have to locate those witnesses and also be in a position to challenge the case put in by the prosecutor. It may go on for three, four, or even five years; nobody knows, because after that there is an appellate procedure.

You were, coincidentally in town, when the University of Buea experienced the worst students strike in its history. What do you make of this unfortunate turn of events at “The Place To Be”?

I think from the moment government reluctantly created the University of Buea, it has been government’s intention to make sure the University does not succeed.

From the very inception, the government did not make the funds available for the implementation of the laws and decree in which the university was created. The government has systematically flouted its own laws and basic texts to sustain the University.

You will find that the government has not given any money whatsoever, to the University of Buea. The University of Buea has a special status. Government created UB just as a smokescreen to gain admission into the Commonwealth.

Be that as it may, I think that the government anticipated that there would be a strike, that properly would be looted and destroyed and by sending in armed troops to use live bullets to shoot and kill students; the government intended that to be as a provocation to the Anglophone Community of this country.

So I see this as a part and parcel of the larger Anglophone problem in this country.

As a lawyer, what would you advise the family of the victims to do?

The families should sue the government at the United Nations Human Rights Commission or the African Commission for Human Rights. The reason why I say so is because those who killed these students were agents of the government.

I listened to the communiqué by the Higher Education Minister and the Southwest Governor and there is no doubt that, that communiqué tacitly took responsibility for the killing of these students, in the sense that they said that there was a confrontation between the police and the students. In international law, this is called command responsibility. These are their agents and therefore, pursuing the agents, and leaving out these government agents, namely the Governor of the Southwest, the Minister of the Higher Education and the Cameroon government itself, would be like chasing the shadow and leaving the substance.

The students are being blamed for having attacked and wounded the police and the latter, in the face of such attack had no other choice but to fire at them. It is an international violation for police to use live ammunition to quell a strike. The right to strike is protected by international convention; it is protected by the Cameroonian constitution. Therefore, the students were not doing anything wrong by going on strike because they felt dissatisfied. Secondly, the absence of a student union, a genuine democratically elected student union in UB, is a travesty and a gross violation of human rights. Thirdly, although they say UB is an Anglo-Saxon university... you will find very well the government has gone everything to erode the Anglo-Saxon character of that university We do not know whether it is an Anglo-Saxon university or a Francophone one.

As I said earlier, the students have no blame. Nobody can blame the students because what they were doing, was exercising the rights conferred on them by international conventions to which Cameroon is signatory. But the university internal rules state clearly that strikes should be within the university and the moment the students step out of campus, they are disturbing public peace. If you say so, then those rules are invalid to the extent that they violate international conventions. Secondly, students in the University of Yaoundé marched to the Prime Minister's office. That demonstration was out of the University campus. Nobody killed them and

the Prime Minister received them. That was the right thing to do. So the students themselves had the right to march to the Governor's office or to demonstrate and the international convention does not have any limits or the extent to which there can be these demonstrations.

But the Yaoundé students did not use kiosks, newspaper stands and just anything to block traffic and even threaten people. Well, it is not the first time this has happened in this particular country. Let me say one thing. I think the government of this country should have learned a lot on the lessons of dialogue from the days of the ghost-town operations. This government does not want dialogue, it is a government that has criminal tendencies, by using forces of law and order, to kill and maim, rape students and commit outrages on girls and loot property. I say so because the lack of a democratically elected student union gave rise to those actions that you see and there can be no excuse whatsoever why the University of Buea does not have a student's union. A professor of the University of Douala told me that as a result of what was happening in Yaounde and Buea, because they have a student union, they were able to or it was possible for them to have genuine dialogue with the students of the University of Douala; that averted the strike.

Also, because there was a student's union in the University of Yaounde, Professor Chumbow was able to have people to talk with. But the University of Buea has created structures that do not exist in any other university in the world. I'm afraid that whatever violence is attributed to students, I put on the responsibility squarely on government. The government intended this result to close down the University on Buea and I think to that extent the government is succeeding. You would have noticed during the strike that the students pinpointed and actually declared a few members of the Buea University administration blameworthy. The placards said it all. These few could have nursed the ugly event...

Well, I read the placards and I talked to a number of students and of late I had to see some correspondences. Let me say one thing, the name of one Victor Ngoh was specifically mentioned and it is a shame that an individual has more than six positions in a University.

If you concentrate so much power in an academic institution in the hands of one man, there's the tendency for him to misuse that power. I think the University of Buea, authorities and the government of Cameroon have

no justification whatsoever, to have concentrated so much power in the hands of one man.

Now, that concentration means that this individual is the Head of Department, initiates a policy as Head of Department, visas in as Vice Dean, visas in as Dean. What fight against corruption are we talking about? What democracy are we talking about? What academic freedom are we talking about? Allegations of sexual misconduct were made against this individual and some other lecturers. In other universities in the world; in other civilised communities, when allegations as serious as these are made, the university has a mandate to clear the name of that individual; to give him a bill of clearance, before the individual can continue in his functions.

Regrettably, these allegations have been made for too long and the University of Buea has not done anything. By failing to investigate these allegations against this particular individual and some of his other accomplices, I think the university authorities and the government of Cameroon are complacent in their conduct. The government of Cameroon might want to deny any complacency and complicity. She might want to deny that it tolerated and encouraged this to happen in Buea for intended effect. In which case you might find the President sanctioning certain individuals like varsity heads, Ministers and security operatives. What do you think?

Well, I will like to say one thing. I fail to see this as a matter of dismissing individuals, because whoever was put in the same situation like the authorities in the University of Buea, with the same resources at their disposal, with the same institutional framework, the results will be the same. I think the authorities of the University of Buea are victims of the conduct of this government, because I do not foresee anywhere in the world that anybody, a Vice Chancellor or a Registrar can actually manage a university under these circumstances. I'm afraid to say that dismissing them or disciplining them would just been an attempt to make them scapegoats. On the contrary, I think some of them have done a commendable job with almost nothing.

If they are guilty, they are guilty of the fact that for reason known to them, or for political motives, they have not been able to join us in the cry and this conspiracy against Anglophones. And I say that unknown to many people, the government attitude towards the University of Buea, the so-called Anglo-Saxon University of Buea is a conspiracy against Anglophones, which commenced from 1961. It's part of a process that is continuing. You can just

look around, look at the Judiciary; look at all other institutions or anything Anglophone in this country; what is happening in Buea is not different.

They are tacitly using Anglophone agents. Is that what you are saying?

Well, I'll call them Anglophone prisoners. Anglophone prisoners because some of these people really have no choice. You see, there have been efforts by the Anglophones, through contributions, to make the University of Buea work. There have been efforts by Anglophones to come and teach in the University of Buea with ridiculous salaries. I hear somebody with a doctorate degree receives FCFA 100.000 at the end of the month. I think these are sacrifices. The only problem I face is the idea of having some of the lecturers on campus who are acting like agents of the government, because there is no explanation for giving one person six very powerful positions. The intention is that either that person is untouchable, too powerful or is an agent of the government.

The fact that the students destroyed the buildings and certain things of the university, what does the law stipulate in this case? Well, the question of the destruction in the university is unfortunate and all sorts of loss of life. But I will say that if there was any destruction in the university, attributable to students because now it is difficult to know what is attributable to the police or attributed to the students. I live in Molyko and I saw policemen destroying people's homes, getting outside the university campus into mini cites and destroying homes, harassing and torturing girls and committing all sorts of outrages on these students. If they followed right into the quarters, tortured and destroyed people's properties who have nothing to do with the strike, it means that they have something to do with the destructions that took place in the University of Buea.

So we cannot say it's the students?

But even if the destruction took place under these circumstances, the government is to blame. The blood of the deceased, of those who have been killed lies at the feet of the government; the destruction lies at the feet of the government. So I hesitate to blame the students.

Killings Due To Poor Conflict Management

By Bouddih Adams

The University of Buea, UB, students' strike which started as a show of solidarity with their striking colleagues in the University of Yaounde I, went out of control due to the lack of strike managers, both on the part of the students and the part of the authorities, including the local administration.

In civilised societies, the police are drafted to move along with demonstrators and prevent them from attacking people and destroying their property, not to confront them. The authorities always use the dialogue approach to try to calm a strike situation. The authorities or those commanding the forces that go to the strike front must be diplomatic and not arrogant in their approach. The action of the authorities in this case rather promoted the crisis. By attempting to crush the strike, the authorities acted rather like strike promoters. The strike would have had fewer casualties, if the authorities had been tactful.

The students on their part, lacked leadership which made their strike difficult to attain their demands resulting rather in the loss of their comrades to police guns. By losing their comrades, the situation is worse than when they engaged the strike action. They would have identified or defined areas where they were going to protect in their own interest.. The strike also went out of hand due to the non-existence of a real students' union and government. By emasculating the students' movement on campus, the authorities did not know it was more dangerous. Had a veritable student union existed, it would have been easier to get into dialogue and quell the strike. Also all student leaders since the birth of UB, namely Ebenezer Akwanga, Tie Muchu, Valentine Nti and so on, were sanctioned never to graduate, thus scaring students.

Poor Strike Management

When the strike started it was peaceful until the police were called in. The Registrar, Dr. Herbert Nganjo Endeley, is quoted as attempting to cajole the students and get them to the discussion table. He started well by attempting to condescend and backslap the students while saying he, too, had problems - being part of the university. But it turned out that he was not accustomed

to that kind of situation which needs a lot of patience, hence he was unable to contain the students.

The upshot was that students caused serious damages on the University cars and the restaurant. On day two of the strike, the students had decided to come out in black and block the entrance into the campus. The police warned them not to step into the road, which the students heeded and only displayed placards stating their demands and grievances.

When they heard that the Governor of the Southwest Region, Thomas Ejake Mbonda, was at the Molyko police post some two hundred metres away, the students organised themselves to march and meet him after announcing it, within earshot of the police and gendarmes, that they would march on the right hand side of the road since the police station is on the left coming from the University entrance.

The police and gendarmes rushed past them and formed a human wall across the highway. Having no way to pass, the students decided to sit on the road. In strike action this means: "We are determined to get our demands through but we are not using violence [now]." That is when the police launched teargas canisters at the students who were sitting down peacefully.

As they scattered in all directions, the forces of law and order chased them right into their hostels, smashing doors, toilets and other household fittings. They beat the students too. Many of them were seriously tortured.

One, caught around the University entrance by the Commander of the Mobile Intervention Police Division in Buea and five of his elements, was asked to roll over and over in mud as they beat him. He was later dragged into the middle of the road and forced by the whip to sing and dance. They didn't pay the piper, anyway, but dictated the tone to him - they claimed that the previous day students were singing that: "Mifiri - short man, Mifiri - short man!" and asked him to sing like that and dance.

As the truncheons found their marks on the student, he sang while crying and dancing, "Mifiri - short man..." The Commander himself seemed to enjoy it, laughing heartily as his elements tormented the boy.

Tactless Administration

It was the tactless approach of the Governor of the Southwest Region and his subordinates in Fako and Buea that led to the sad twist in the strike

despite the fact that some policemen have studied human rights and conflict management in some Cameroonian institutes of high repute.

If things went out of hand, it was because the authorities tried to crush the strike rather than manage it. The Governor was overheard at the Molyko Police Station, just after the students were dispersed with teargas and about an hour before the shooting, lamenting that: “Il y a la faiblesse” (there is weakness).

The Government authorities therefore, employed the show-of-force approach towards the strike, which degenerated into the regrettable situation that has smeared the government’s image in the eye of the public, during these days of grandes ambitions. Had the Governor asked the police and gendarmes to withdraw and, for instance, moved forward with his arms thrown out and said: “Oh, my children, what makes you sit out in this excruciating heat? Come on, tell me your problems, let’s sit down and talk it over,” he would have won the hearts of the students - the bloody outcome would have been averted.

However, there might have also been a language problem as the Governor is French-speaking (Francophone) and can hardly express himself in English. Administration is communication. The problem also seems to be the bad precedence set in the early 1990s when administrators ordered forces to shoot at demonstrators and thereafter the administrators were promoted, for example, Oben Peter Ashu, Bell Luc Rene, and so on.

Meantime, the killing of students has created two main problems to be solved now: the demands of the students and the deaths caused. The killing also depicts Cameroonian authorities as still uncivilised. The forces of law and order would have used rubber bullets if it were absolutely necessary to shoot, not live bullets.

Another gruesome fact is that one of the students killed was shot from behind. The bullet got him in the back of the head. This means he was running away. If he were attacking his killer, he would have got the bullet in his forehead. This again demonstrates how trigger-happy the Cameroon police and gendarmes are.

May 04, 2005 at 06:05 AM in [Special Report: The University of Buea Crisis](#) | [Permalink](#)

Cameroon Varsity Crisis: Management Must Take the Blame

By Julius Ndem Mbeleke Buea

Student crises are not strange in this country, not even beyond our borders. It must also be admitted that it is rather the comportment of the authorities, vis-à-vis the crises, that matters. In other words, how much did management do to avoid the problem? Or, having failed, what was their reaction to quench the fire?

It cannot be gainsaid that UB management failed in both facets. UB management knew that Yaoundé I, the mother University, was on strike for a week already. They also knew that it could contaminate Buea and, in fact, the rest of Cameroon's Universities. It could only have been obvious because they all have similar problems. UB management should, therefore, have taken enough measures to pre-empt and, thus, avoid the overspill there. Deliberately or otherwise, they chose the path of reactionary managers. One of the greatest risks of the reactionary approach to management of crises is the likely loss in property and human life. UB incurred both.

How come management was taken by surprise? Could their covert security network have gone to slumber? However, having chosen the reactionary path, they blundered. They failed to avail themselves of the ongoing negotiations between the students' leaders and senior authorities in Yaoundé. With a bit of tact, management should have contracted to send the representatives of the students to join their counterparts in Yaoundé to continue the negotiations with the authorities there. This was going to have the effect of appeasing both the students and the general atmosphere and, at the same time, find some breathing time for management to think out new strategies to handle the crisis. They did not see it that way. And they paid for it. One other factor worsened management's problem: the proscribed student government. How come UB resents student government? Although the kids pay student union charges, this forum is barely tolerated. When there is no student government, the relationship between them and management must look like two deaf persons who can only communicate with each other by stabbing.

The loss in human life and property (considerable damage to infrastructure and automobiles) is a direct consequence of the management flaws of the authorities of the University of Buea.

The administrative as well as the security officers further compounded matters. How come the administrative and security authorities armed their officers with live ammunition against unarmed students? The students hurled stones at the troops. Admitted. But any level-headed person cannot admit it that stone-throwing be reciprocated with firing of live bullets. This is excessive and ought to be condemned vehemently.

Tear gas and water cannons would have been largely adequate. Who gave orders for the shooting in live ammunition? A commission of inquiry should highlight these questions and others and the defaulting officials sanctioned. The striking students must take part of the blame, anyhow. Why wouldn't they emulate their counter-parts of Yaoundé I? They had been on strike for more than a week, but had neither destroyed anything nor did they attack the security forces. Buea students provoked the anger of the security forces too soon in the crisis. To worsen matters, the great bulk of the officers were the hastily trained recruits of Mutengene Police College. They provoked the students and Molyko residents with stone-throwing and outright brutality.

What Way Forward?

Let us stop polarising issues along political and ethnic divides. It is not only naïve but foolish to continue to dispute that the university population constitutes the socio-political elite of our polity in abeyance.

Rather, we must encourage discussion with the students. The best forum for this is student government. This would help address the issues that concern them as well as nurture responsibility traits in our children who must necessarily replace us as we pass on.

However, it is hard to believe that by pacifying our Universities we would have resolved our aching problem of Cameroon's rotten system. The University is only a sub-system of Cameroon's inefficient societal framework.

May 03, 2005 at 11:44 AM in [Special Report: The University of Buea Crisis](#) | [Permalink](#) | [Comments \(0\)](#) | [TrackBack](#)

What Is Your Opinion About The UB Strike?

Compiled By Walter Wilson Nana & Effa Tambenkongho

Business Has Stagnated Since the strike started, we have been grounded. Business has been grounded. A good chunk of our customers are students. Now that they are not there, my daily turnover has suddenly dropped. The strike has a negative effect on my business Eyong Agbor, Manager, Cyber Café

There Is Instability

Molyko is a university centre, with lots of students. Students do a lot of purchases. With a strike action, like the one we are in, the students are not stable. Consequently, business activities will experience instability. We cannot buy more goods because the market is not there. Now, we are paralysed. When the students are not, we cannot do effective business.

A comment I will make about the current situation in Molyko is that a strike action is not the best. But if there were an entente between the university authorities and the students, it would have been better. The idea of bringing in policemen and gendarmes into the show was not the best. A consultation within the Governor, the top security officers and the students would have been better. The policemen are just out to kill. They have no notion of understanding and dialogue. The university authorities were supposed to explain government action to the students.

John Nzang, Shopkeeper

Overzealous Police Officials

The strike has enormous negative impact in Molyko, unlike what obtained in Yaounde. In Yaounde, the strike action was well handled. The authorities made sure no student was hurt.

In Buea, there was over zealousness on the part of the police officials. We have victims already. There is a complete stand still in Molyko. Business and most activities have stagnated in Molyko. Most of the students have left Molyko and Buea in general. Buea has become a ghost town. The manner in which the strike was managed was not the best.

Students were brutalised, policemen broke into their rooms; some girls were raped; a girl was found cooking and the policemen are said to have poured her soup on her. Most of the students are traumatised. Even those who were not interested in the strike were forced to come out of their rooms. The strike was fuelled by the policemen who harassed even passive onlookers. The authorities helped the strike to be effective.

George Eta, Worker, University of Buea

Police Brutality and Stealing

I witnessed the strike in Molyko. I was not happy. Who asked the policemen to break into private homes and the residential area of students? Students were beaten and some killed. The police stole telephones and many portable items from the students. That makes me very uncomfortable with the police. To me, the university students had genuine grievances. It had nothing to do with the neighbourhoods. Why should the police come into the neighbourhoods? George Ateh, Military Officer

Students Have Left

The strike is weighing on us a lot. Now, we roast fish and there are no people to buy. Business is not moving as expected. Our principal and reliable customers, the students are not there. We count on them. My sales have dropped. I am roasting tonight to wind time.

A woman who roasts fish.

Turnover Has Dropped

The strike has a lot of negative impact on my business. Most of my customers are university students and they are all gone. My daily input has been divided to about four times from what I usually make. I will quickly add that the authorities that be, did not act in the right way. Rather than negotiating with the students, they came for a war.

That is my reading of the situation. That was not the right way to attend to such a situation. The students have a lot of problems across the country. So, they should attend to these problems rather than impose on them.

Valerie Spencer Tesso, Manager, Video Shop

Business Is Grounded

Business is very slow. There used to be a scramble when students were around. We don't sell anything now. We don't have customers again because UB students have gone.

Peter Ngwa

We Are Selling Less

Business is no longer moving as usual because when the students are here, we usually sell more, but now we are not selling much.

Francis Ukaegbu

Police Intervention Aggravated Strike

I think the strike would have been very smooth if the forces of law and order had not intervened. It is the stress of the forces of law that aggravated the whole thing. The increment in fees is uncalled for, given the socio-economic nature of the country and the very low living standards in Cameroon.

Steve Kofete

Students Were Correct

I believe the government has to do all so that the students are fine. I heard government has increased school fees, yet things are so difficult now. So the students were correct to go on a strike. Thomas Chuckwo

I Would Have Killed 10 Policemen

It is very bad for peacekeeping forces to shoot unarmed students. It is now Cameroonians have to think. If it were any of my relatives, I would have used a weapon to kill even 10 policemen. In Yaoundé, the Prime Minister received the students, and talked to them, but here in Buea, we want to show that we have more guns and bullets.

Dieudonne Mbufong

Police and Gendarmes Are Thieves

It is very normal that university students have to go on strike. But what we have realised is that the gendarmes and police are thieves, because they broke into students' hostels, stealing money, cell phones, TVs, radios, and so on. The system is very bad because the forces of law and order have now become thieves.

Juvert Choe

Government Should Take Action Against The Police

I would like to say that the Cameroon government should take serious action against the forces of law and order that broke into students' hostels. It touched my heart, because I'm a citizen. Brian Niba

I Blame the Governor and DO

I place the blame for the consequences of the UB strike: the brutalisation and killing of students at the doorsteps of the Governor, the DO, and the police and UB administration.

They lacked a dynamic approach that could have solved the problem amicably by bringing the students to the dialogue table. It is said "If you fail to assess and to a large degree master your problems, there is a guarantee that you would always mismanage your problems and create new ones. Now, there are many questions as to which problem would the government solve: the students demands, compensating non-students for the loot and damages, or calm the families of the tortured, raped and killed students? Oh God, the authorities You said we should respect are a threat to our lives. So, we need you now more than ever before.

Shey Wacani, Buea

The Students Were Right

The students are correct; they cannot be paying fees without allowances, yet they keep increasing the fees. It means they want only civil servants to go to school. I cannot be selling oranges, mangoes and they expect me to pay high fees.

Victorine Ndah

Students Can't Study Without Equipment

I support the strike because students cannot be studying without equipment. They would earn the degrees but they would not be effective.

Bridget Tanyi

I Want Peace To Reign Again

I feel sorry for the children who died. The police should not think that because they wear

khaki uniforms so others cannot wear them. I want peace to reign again.

Helen Fouda

Students Should Stay At Home

They should stay home until the problem is solved. I did not also like the way the police officers behaved. How can people with weapons fight with people who have no weapons I don't like that?

Emilia Mbetoh

May 03, 2005 at 11:31 AM in [Special Report: The University of Buea Crisis](#) | [Permalink](#)

Comments

The police we have back home really lack mental training. It's a sham to see the forces of law and order doing what they're expected to be fighting' against. By these I mean stealing and brutalizing civilians. I just imagine what has happened to my poor friends back home in UB and besides the peaceful Buea I grew in knew before leaving. Let God bless Cameroon.

Seattle, Washington, United States

Posted by: [Mbonde Ivo](#) | May 3, 2005 04:02 PM

I don't understand why police officers, should be firing at unarmed students who wish to make their grievances known. This is another example

of the brutality of Biyas's regime. While Students go without studying facilities we have Biya And His Gang Of Thieves, in the name of 60 ministers transferring Cameroons wealth to foreign banks in Europe. How many ministers have children attending U.B or any Cameroonian University? They all use the stolen money to send their children to expensive universities abroad. Yet Cameroonians still vote for a Stupid government. Until we Cameroonians come to our right senses and kick out this corrupt government once, and an for all, this will continue.

Posted by: [Malcom](#) | May 3, 2005 06:55 PM

I will pray authorities do something before those Heroes are buried. The strike my start again when the corpse leave the mortuary. If it has to happen let it be peaceful fellow students.

Posted by: [KENE](#) | May 4, 2005 06:32 AM

Folks, Fellow Cameroonians, I think we need to learn how to solve problems. The police have always been this way and the administration does nothing about it all because they are not better. I wonder at times if these policemen have children. They need to be talked to, and in a manner soft enough to appeal to their hearts. They brought police from Douala, because they knew Buea people will fear the fate of their own children. What a mess. But still, the government sits and calms. Anyway, what do we expect when they work to the pace of the Bosses? Someday, judgement will meet us all, after all the sun shines on you and me, soldier or civilian, governor or fish roaster, and therefore we shall have our pay as we carry our lives. Mclims Berlin, Germany

Posted by: [Mclims](#) | May 4, 2005 11:39 AM

Je suis mal je suis véritablement en rage contre les porcs qu'on appelle policiers ; en rage contre le système vraiment en rage mais surtout en rage contre mes parents, mes grands frères et tous ceux qui nous ont précédés; comment ont-ils pu laisser ce pays en arriver là ? Comment aujourd'hui des hommes peuvent avoir la force de massacrer avec tant de froideur ce qu'ils ont comme avenir ? Oui parce que c'est nous jeunes d'aujourd'hui, étudiant

d'aujourd'hui qui sommes l'avenir ; parmi ceux-là qui nous massacrent aujourd'hui, il y'en a qui n'ont même pas le niveau pour être nos collaborateurs demain. Alors je ne voudrais pas que mes enfants et mes petits frères aient honte et soient en rage contre moi demain c'est pour cela qu'on doit y mettre fin. Alors cher(e)s ami(e)s levons nous et cette fois ci pour de vrai. Si nous ne pouvons pas choisir la façon dont nous allons mourir, choisissons au moins la façon dont nous allons vivre.

Posted by: [fred](#) | May 4, 2005 12:09 PM

It is a very sad situation that the future of rulers of the country are being brutalised by heartless individuals who lack professional ethics. This is much evidence that the sad individuals are not qualified for the job and this goes just to accentuate the notion of bribery and corruption in our country.

The government has been manipulating the media sending out false information about the current state of events especially in the Ngoa Ekelle campus where I am an eye witness, yet the journalists claim to be enjoying press freedom while they themselves are not allowed to report exactly what they see on the field. I stand for the strike and ask everyone to fight to the end

Conclusion

The chapter has touched on the role of Anglophone Cameroon's civil society in the UB strike. The civil society constituted amongst other: the local branch of SYNES, which is the higher education teachers' trade union; the SCNC, the umbrella organisation of the Anglophone secessionist movements; the trauma centre; members of some political parties in the region and certain alumni associations. All of them commented on the strike from their ideological point of view. Most of them strongly condemned the degree of violence that accompanied the strike, in particular the killing of students. The next chapter is the epilogue which shows how the strike came to a temporal end. It was a temporal end because the post-strike era showed that there was still much tension in the University of Buea and other universities. What were the causes of this tension and how were they manifested? Who were the new actors during this post-strike period? In

addition, the chapter has examined what the public opinion had to say about the University of Buea strike.

Epilogue to a Strike

The epilogue to the strike provides an end to the university students' strike. This chapter specifically touches on the voices of the man-on-the street, business people and other personalities about the strike. This is found in the sixteen testimonies compiled by the journalists in the newspapers. The strike is thought to have ended with the transfer of the Vice Chancellor of Buea University as well as a general shake up in Cameroon state universities. It is not very clear whether the appointments of new VC in state universities was the result of the student strike or of a normal Presidential Decree that announced appointments and transfers of university authorities. The transfer of the VC of Buea University and the appointment of one of his peers ushered in a temporal peace and a new liberal atmosphere. This lasted for a short while and another student imbroglio removed him from the seat. This chapter examines the post-strike tensions that were so profound in the Buea University. The book ends with the unfinished task which raises new venues and themes for further research.

“UB CRISIS X-ray: Business, Property, Life And Limb Were Lost In Molyko”

Compiled By Pegue Manga, Bouddih Adams, Effa Tambenkongho & Nana Walter Wilson

There Was a lot of Intimidation

It was very bad out here. We live in an area where most of the inhabitants are students. The police were all over the place and it intimidated most of the students. They were bound to run back to their respective family homes. Business was so slow. When the strike action started, we thought it was going to end soon. But things rather got out of hand. It became a running battle between the students and the police. I was caught in the action, brutalised, wounded and locked up at the police station.

Emmanuel Asek Bessong, Shopkeeper, Molyko

Monthly Targets Not Met

During the month-long strike action, it was rough on us. I did not meet my target for the month. I almost closed down my business; sales were poor. I also felt very uncomfortable with the killings. It was not normal for the police to shoot unarmed students.

Samson Bain, Manager, Texaco Petrol Station, Mile 17

I Felt For the Children

When the strike started, we were forced to close our doors because of violent reactions and stone throwing from the students. With that atmosphere, we could not operate. Hence, our sales dropped. Consequently, we are yet to pay our employees. I was touched by the gunning down of students. It could have been my own brother or any relation. I felt for the children. To the UB administration, I tell them that they did not manage the situation well. The students would not have gone out into the streets, if there were no major problems haunting them.

Hilda Forka, Sales Manager, Books 'n' Things, Molyko

Cars Burnt, Property Looted

The one-month long strike affected everybody. I was personally touched. I could not go out for my business operations. Movement was stalled. Things were difficult; the taxi-drivers could not operate; they could not raise their daily proceeds; students were on strike; cars were burnt and property looted. Personally, I was very touched. For a month, my business was grounded. I could not do my sales and transactions. It was terrible! However, we are happy that things are falling in place. But I will quickly add that striking is not something illegal. When people go out for a strike action, there must be reasons. Those who were shot were innocent souls. The forces of law and order had no reason(s) to shoot them. They had a reason to go on strike. It could have been a friend or a relation. I use this medium to say "ASHIA" to the affected families.

Sebastian Makam, Buea

No Students, No Business

The UB junction is the only place I can achieve my livelihood in. We are here because of the students. Without the students, we have to pack out of Molyko. We sell largely to them. We are happy that the problems have been resolved. But the killings created a lot of panic. I was afraid. I could not move out. It felt very bad that two students were shot to death. To the UB administration, I advise them to listen to their children, the students. Everybody has his/her way of looking at things. If you find a child asking for something, go down to him/her and ask. And he/she will explain to you. So that it will not end up with people dying.

Julius Fanfou, Proprietor, Mobile Phone Shop

Very Unfortunate Period

It was a very unfortunate period for us. As a businessman, I was a victim of the strike. It was the students, police or gendarmes forcing us to shut our doors. Supplies from the respective breweries could not be made. Yet we are obliged to pay taxes. Some days, I could not sell more than five bottles of beer. Business stagnated. It was unfortunate that human blood was also spilled. We cannot buy a human being in the market. As a parent, I was very sad that you could see dead bodies lying in the streets. There is talk that some are not students. No matter, the loss of life during a strike action is unacceptable.

Dieudonne Yamba, Proprietor, Off Licence, Molyko

Sales Dropped, Lives Lost

Definitely, I think it is superfluous to even ask me if my business was affected. My sales were almost zero for about a month. I saw my sales go down by 90%. It did affect and we are yet to come out of that situation. We are still in the recession. We are hoping things will get better. It was also quite unfortunate with the shooting to death of some people. I felt it was such a waste of life. When things like these happen, we hope that people come out with the best solutions. When lives are lost, it is quite unfortunate. To the administration in UB and Buea, I tell them to handle things better

next time. It is also for the students. Both sides did not handle the matter properly. Consequently, people lost their lives. It is a shame.

Kenneth Moughallo, Proprietor, Restaurant, Molyko

It Was a Blow to Us

Actually, the UB strike almost brought us to our knees. Sales were not encouraging during that period. Most of the days, we were forced to close our doors and go home, without having sold anything. The strike action has come and gone, our sales balance sheet shows poor sales. Yet we are expected to pay taxes. The strike dealt with us, terribly. I also heard that people were shot to death. It was really terrible. I was not happy with that kind of atmosphere. To the powers that be, in UB, I tell them to come to a compromise with the students, to ensure the future of the younger generation. This type of situation should never repeat itself. It caused both human and material damages. It was a great loss to Buea and Cameroon as a whole.

Roseline Benyuy Abougichi, Sales Manager, Computer Hard & Software, Molyko

It Was So Pathetic

I felt so bad with the killings during the strike action. Even if they were not my children, but a child is a child for everybody. I mourned those children. It is a big loss to the respective families. To the UB authorities, I tell them to be open-minded and apologetic. We have to show respect for each other.

Mrs Regina Elad, Great Soppo, Buea

We Depend On Student Population

Businesses around the Molyko neighbourhood depend on the student population. As a result of the strike action, we were affected. We were forced to shut our doors before 8 p.m. We did not respect our closing time of 10 p.m. It had a negative impact on our daily turnover. I felt very bad with the killings. It was a peaceful demonstration by the students. I see no reason why the police had to intervene to the extent of using live bullets on

students. I think the UB administration knows what to do and when to do it. It was an issue that needed only dialogue. Only dialogue finally resolved it. UB administration failed. They had to invite the students for dialogue rather than employing force to something, which was not possible.

Nfor Tansi, Manager, Cyber Café, Molyko

There Was Insecurity

For the past one month, it was not possible to come and hang around the UB junction, waiting for students, like we have been doing. Without the students, our businesses cannot progress. The strike action also affected us. What I expected to make for a month was not achieved. Only half of the expected revenue came in. With the increasing gunshots and stone throwing, I had to run for my safety. I could not stand the insecurity.

Marceline Ehu, Manager, Mobile Telephone Booth

Too Much Pressure to Get Too Little

We are very happy that the strike has been called off, the students are back to class and life is back to normal. We are happy for the intervention of the Minister of Higher Education. Though it came late, it was appropriate. He took two hours to solve what we could not solve in five weeks. Students are upbeat, determined as from next week they will start bombarding them with tests. Yes, we regret the loss of life, destruction of property. But, unfortunately, we live in a country where before you get what you need, you have to mount pressure. It's unfortunate that too much pressure was exerted to get too little.

Dr. Ernest Molua

Still to Feel Impact

I was in Buea during that period, involved in my final year project; but I was also involved in the strike. I did not play a major role. I actually got involved the day we went to the mortuary to remove the corpse of Gilbert Nforlem who was shot dead. I do not regret the strike action, because we have received what we wanted. But on my studies, the programme of UB has

not changed. The University games still stands for July 15. We are still to see the impact.

Emmanuel Oben Oben Student (UB)

The VC, UBSU Should Reconcile For UB's Future

The strike took me unawares. I was in class when it started. But being a student leader, recognised by the administration, I had to get in and strike a balance or mediate between the students and the administration. It was difficult in the beginning because the leaders were anonymous. After the unfortunate incident [killing of two students], the leaders emerged but it was not easy as they saw us as sell-outs. Even when the Commission came and we, the students' delegates were invited, dialogue was still impossible, as the entire student body was outside and warned that if the VC did not come out, there wouldn't be dialogue.

I told the Director of Students Affairs about this, but when we came out, the students were ready to stone us, thinking we had dialogued with the administration. I declared my stance with the students and that was the only way to pave a way for dialogue. This was the only thing I could do to be part of the problem and part of the solution. I could only be an adviser to the UBSU leadership.

I am glad that the Minister was meeting the students' requests, because I was very uncomfortable with the situation. The recognition of UBSU was a good thing. But the future of the union depends on the base they build now. They need a solid foundation and the VC has to be part of the groundwork. I am advising the students to be able to reconcile with the VC in order to make the future of the university brighter.

Elvis Ndansi, CAMSA President

We Needed the Strike

During the first strike, I was in my room. But in the second, I was on the streets. Obviously, I thought that the strike came in when we really needed it. It has a positive impact on my studies because if the strike did not take place, I would have spent a longer period to acquire my degree. I will like to tell the administration of UBSU to stick to their principles and not allow the

administration to manipulate them. They should have that goal to achieve in mind.

Joseph Taku Enow UB Student

The Outcome Is Positive But....

It wouldn't have been bad, if the strike went through peacefully. But when we students decided to march to meet the Governor and they were violently dispersed and students were shot dead I felt very bad. The police came and smashed my door, beat us and took away our cell phones. In our futile struggle to retrieve our phones and as they were lashing and kicking us, my breakable plates, cups and a chair was broken. We ran away and sought refuge in Soppo with our aunt. I only came back the following morning. Since then, I supported the strike fully but each time violence erupted, like on the day of the removal of the corpse and the on May 24, following the showdown with the forces, I had to again seek refuge. My parents got very worried and were calling all the time. I am happy the strike has ended and we are back in school. But we should pray for those who lost their lives during the strike.

Mabel M. Atemnkeng, UB Student

The Nice, The Nasty & The Naughty Of UB Strike

By Bouddih Adams

The dust of the one-month strike in the University of Buea, UB, has finally settled. But the dust has only settled. Any breeze, let alone wind, would raise the dust making eyes to sore. The dust could, however, be wiped away if the up-shoot of the crisis is any lesson to go by.

The foremost thing to retain is that it was managed the way a crisis should never be managed. All the human and material losses are due to the poor management of the crisis.

The greatest hope now is that the students, university authorities, the local administration, and the government, in general, have learnt their lessons. Things always happen that leave a negative or positive impact on the

people, but the hope is always that positive lessons should be drawn therefrom. Witch-hunting must be avoided.

It is no good news that all the students' union leaders of UB have never graduated. All past students' union leaders were witch-hunted and penalised. The issue of a shrine on campus should be forgotten. The Chinese have a saying that time is the best cure for muddy water. Jimmy Cliff also sang: Time Will Tell.

A University as a Dynamic Society

The university is a dynamic society where people from all backgrounds and all shades of opinion interact. These differences are always a source of conflict. But these can always be harnessed and even used positively for the university. What matters is the manner in which such unavoidable conflicts are resolved.

In alternative conflict resolution, which is the vogue today, parties to a conflict make concessions – each makes a step towards the other – until they find themselves in middle ground. The university should show that example to its community. Meanwhile, the students' union must be allowed to exist. The ugly twist, which the strike took, was largely due to the absence of a students' union.

Every Anglo-Saxon university encourages, rather than discourages students' governments. It would have been easier to negotiate with a students' government if one existed in UB. The administration should always, in case of any protest, allow demonstrations to take place only on campus and pursue dialogue. The show of force, through ultimatums and threats, should never be employed. As we have seen, such can never work.

The government has, hopefully, realised that the Governor's attempt to crush the strike failed woefully and has given the government a negative image in the eyes of the international community. The entire international community should be questioning why the government ordered the forces of law and order to use live bullets on demonstrating students demanding their rights.

It is now undisputable that when the crisis started, each time the Governor went down to Molyko, blood flowed. In fact, each time he went down there, he gave orders whose language was fire and blood. This has cost

the university, the government and members of the society a lot. However, the Governor's orders paid him in his own coin.

The Governor – Commander-in-Chief of the Armed Forces in the Southwest Region – was marooned by unarmed students he had declared war against and he and his armed forces ran, tail between legs, and took refuge inside the Molyko Police Station. The students literally captured the Police Station and held it for hours with the Governor inside, but for the intervention of some reinforcement from Yaounde. He had to be air-lifted back home. We hope he learnt his lesson of never to give wrong signals.

He surely did; like in the “stealing” away of the corpse of Aloysius Ambouer, one of the killed students, under cover of darkness to avoid confrontation. We hope the police also learnt their lesson.

Take the case of one traveller who was coming to Buea after the riot on the day of the removal of the corpse of Gilbert Nforlem. The young traveller discovered that there were no taxis at the Mile 17 Park that evening. He had to trek. He got to the Malingo Junction at about 8.00 pm when the students were still rioting. Taken by surprise, he ran into the Molyko Police Station clutching his travelling bag tightly to his belly.

The policemen might have thought that he was a student suicide bomber. Some of them dived for cover and others ran helter skelter for their lives.

Way Forward

The authorities should rather concentrate on smarting from the crisis than engage in witch-hunting. It doesn't matter what it takes to make peace. It matters what it takes to make war. The students must also know this. Since the strike came to an end, by now, the University of Buea Students Union, UBSU, would have already met with the Vice Chancellor and charted a new course for the good of the institution.

But, as far as our investigations go, that is yet to happen – to say the least. Whether the university students and authorities like it or not, all eyes are focused on UB. The idea of polarising the University for selfish ends will not help. When the strike started at the University of Yaounde I, the head of that institution did not accuse people from any region. In Douala, the Rector did not accuse any people.

Same for Dschang. All the authorities did was look into the problems objectively. It is not too late for the authorities of UB to objectively look into

the problems plaguing the “Place To Be.” For instance, catch-up classes will not do, yet an extension of the semester poses another problem. Why? The GCE is already on course and many of the examiners are lecturers at the University of Buea.

It is during the GCE that they catch up with what they cannot make up from the University. Even if the semester were extended, the lecturers would not be there. This is definitely a big problem, which should preoccupy the authorities as well as the students.

The university is above our individual interests. Besides, UB is supposed to be an Anglo-Saxon university. But if the stakeholders insist on putting their individual interest that goes with pride above the University, then they should simply do what pride requires: withdraw.

Epilogue

If the University of Buea were an Anglo-Saxon institution, not only in name but also in nature and structure, then we know what should have happened after the Minister came and recognised the students’ union and their grievances. Anybody, with an Anglo-Saxon frame of mind, would do just that - the Governor, too, if he had the same frame of mind. Are We Together?

Looking Beyond The University Crisis

Jacob Tambe

On April 28, a few hundred students of the University of Yaounde I took to the streets. The immediate cause of the strike was the absence of drinking water and lavatories on campus. One week earlier, a group calling itself the Association pour la Défense des Droits des Etudiants du Cameroun, ADDEC, had published a list of grievances of students. Some five members of this group went on a hunger strike.

The students on hunger strike first went to the Archbishop’s house but were sent away. They proceeded to the Red Cross and received similar treatment. The authorities simply refused to genuinely look into the students’ grievances.

Incidentally, it was these same ADDEC members who went on a hunger strike shortly before the Presidential election in 2004. They had a similar list

of grievances as the ones they published in April 2005. Had the authorities addressed their grievances in 2004, there would have been no need for them to resume their hunger strike a few months later. When they were chased away from the Archbishop's house and the Red Cross, the students had no choice but to carry their hunger strike to the campus.

Their presence on campus generated a lot of sympathy from peers. When the few hundred students took to the streets asking for drinking water and toilets, few of them had actually read the grievances enunciated by ADDEC. A simple promise by the University of Yaounde I administration to provide these cheap facilities on campus would surely have put an end to the strike.

Instead, the university administration said those on strike were not students. The Rector of the University said those who were fomenting trouble were non-students implementing a political agenda. That declaration by the Rector incensed even those students, who, until then, had not been participating in the strike. The lie was too blatant to be swallowed even by passive students.

Until then, less than 1000 students, out of a population of 22,000 had participated in the strike. But, as soon as government-run radio broadcast that declaration, about 15,000 students joined the strike. As government-run radio multiplied provocative statements and lies, students' fury reached boiling point and 20,000 students defied heavily armed troops and stormed the streets, blocking traffic for several days.

The authorities still refused to see the handwriting on the wall. Government-run radio continued peddling lies. And, as the days went by, the demands of the students kept increasing. The strike had gone far beyond the five "hunger-striking" students and the few hundred who were demanding drinking water and toilets. Desperate attempts by the government to break the strike by causing radio and television to read communiqués by fake students' leaders did not impress the striking students.

Wild Fire in the Wind

When the government finally realised that it needed to negotiate, the strike had gone beyond the confines of the University of Yaounde I. Students in professional schools in Yaounde and the University of Yaounde II joined the ranks of the demonstrators.

Prof Fame Ndong, Minister of Higher Education, was now forced to go to the students. He promised the immediate provision of water and toilet facilities. Instead of applauding, students booed and jeered. They needed more. At the same time that Fame Ndong was addressing students in Yaoundé, University of Buea students took to the streets. Again, the authorities refused to address their grievances.

Heavily armed troops tried to disperse the students violently. That was the beginning of trouble as the students persisted with their strike. In apparent panic, anti-riot security personnel opened fire on the unarmed students, killing two in the process. A passing taxi cab driver was also gunned down. Several other students received bullet wounds and other injuries inflicted by brutal members of the police force.

Despite this grave situation, the Vice Chancellor of the University of Buea still refused to dialogue with the students. Instead, she issued threats that the students simply ignored. Meantime, students in other universities went on strike, making the same demands like their colleagues in Yaoundé and Buea.

It took one month for the Minister of Higher Education to go to Buea and address the grievances of the students. After just a few hours of dialogue, the students called off their strike. Finally, the dialogue, which the authorities had avoided, turned out to be the magic wand. The University crisis offers an opportunity for Cameroonian authorities to learn that problems are best nipped in the bud before they rear their ugly heads.

The 1991-92 University crisis was engendered by the lack of foresight by the authorities. The 2005 crisis was history repeating itself. Government must plan, rather than just reacting to situations. And government must genuinely address problems whenever they arise. Pretending that problems don't exist would not cause them to go away. If government does not learn these lessons, then it would have itself to blame when intractable crises crop up in the future.

Njeuma: The Path to Her Present Demise

By Julius Ndem Mbeleke, Buea

The meeting between the Minister of Higher Education and the students of UB, 27th May 2005, may have ushered back the peace that the Institution and its City have sought for close to a month now. The communiqué announced such common ground as recognition of student union, all courses to be offered at re-sit sessions, and so on, and so on. There is, therefore, no doubt that the outcome of the concertation constitutes a victory, with multiple facets, for both the student movement and for the course of democracy at large.

The price may have been high, yes. Humanity must regret the loss in human life and the extensive destruction to property. It must now be considered as the normal process of democratic growth unless, of course, the Regime turns trickster once again. The positive consequences of the student victory can be varied, and will come to light only as things unfold. However, one of these consequences is already glaring.

It is the defeat of the “thick neck” policies of the VC, Dr. Mrs. Njeuma. It will probably be seen, with time, that the defeat of that policy is the best thing that could have happened to the Anglophone community of Cameroon today. The origin of these stiff neck policies of hers can be traced to the violations, by her mentors, of the provisions of the Decree of 1993 creating the so-called “Anglo-Saxon” University of Buea.

She was appointed without regard to the provisions of that Decree namely that, UB Senate and Council shall nominate the VC for appointment by Government. Yaoundé brushed aside both Senate and Council! Furthermore, the same authorities have failed to respect the requirement that the VC shall hold office for four years, renewable only once!

Mrs. Njeuma has been on seat for more than fifteen years! To worsen matters, it was feared that she could turn the Institution into a political ground because she doubles as member of the politbureau of the ruling CPDM party. The public’s apprehensions were soon to be proven right!

Her mentors had, thus, set the track that has goaded her to the present demise. Yet the VC should have known that power could be legitimized through the deployment of popular policies. Flt. Lt. Jerry Rawlings got elected for a second term as President of Ghana because his policies met the aspirations of the Ghanaian people although he had come to power through

a military coup d'état! Mandam persecuted the lecturers and student unionism. The VC's first target was a University dons.

Mrs. Njeuma is on record for scaring off any lecturer who dares waver about toeing the drawn lines of the political establishment of the CPDM Regime of which politbureau member she is. She equates critical scholarship with opposition political militancy. And so, UB has been turned into a ground for political rhetoric, not the one for critical academics as was originally intended. This stiff neck policy of hers has earned her a great deal of unpopularity, sending away lecturers like Dr. Nyamnjoh, Dr. Ben Jua, (Hon) Dr. Ngwasiri, Dr. Kai Sotau (the German), Dr. Awasum, and so on.

Several years back, the VC refused to execute the instructions of her Minister then, Mr. Atangana Mebara, to reinstate two lecturers that she has persecuted for a number of years. The two gentlemen had to be deployed somewhere else. UB still persists in her dire need for teaching staff. Every successive act of the VC only drove her more and more unpopular.

Nobody can afford to develop stiff legs policies in the management of public affairs. You necessarily fail and look awkward. The VC orders her students back to campus, but she is stiff about meeting them! How could the VC afford to disregard the students with whom she must share the same campus! What contradiction!

It did not matter to Dr. Mrs. Njeuma that her Minister in Yaounde had held talks with students in the open air; in the rain, we are told! Her resentment of student unionism is certainly the one factor that discredits her the most.

It is hard to fancy how the VC of an "Anglo Saxon" University, herself an "Anglo Saxon", would afford to run the Institution without a student union! Yet the VC knows only too well that the main effect of the absence of the student union will be that the students will be unable to channel their expectations to Management.

No doubt it bubbled until it exploded! And the "Kids" action was as concerted as it was spontaneous! Without a student union! We owe these "Kids" Kudos!

June 14, 2005 at 04:01 PM in [Guest Contributors](#) | [Permalink](#)

The Dangerous Fallouts of UB Strike

By J. Tanch Buea

For most, the University of Buea strike has come and gone but for those perceived by the Vice- Chancellor as causing it, the threats to life, career and studentship have just begun. The unfolding drama can potentially spill out of control. It is apparent from a review of the extensive comments of the handling of the strike by Dr. Dorothy Njeuma online that some have read her tendency to cast a simple student strike in ethnocentric terms as capable of igniting a Rwandan-like Hutu/Tutsi pogrom in Cameroon. The signs are clearly ominous.

The authorities insisted from the onset that the events in the University was either a Northwest conspiracy to militarily take over the University or an insurgency by the SCNC to achieve the same objective.

It is obvious to any keen observer that this attempt at deceit through self-delusion was the result of two factors. Firstly, being an Ahidjoist adept at the totalitarianism of the past, the VC regards the use of maximum lethal force as the best method of breaking a strike by kids too young to be her grandchildren. She considers genuine dialogue with our children whom she has uncharitably labelled hooligans as amounting to bending “over backward to pat them on the back as if what they have done is right”. The implication is that it is demeaning for her to do so since the “students, parents and lecturers criticise and run down” the regime every day.

Secondly, there is also the profit motive in presenting the crisis as an SCNC insurgency. It was by this that the government was scared into sending enough gendarmes and police to guard the University against the “SCNC and its guerrillas.”

This way, the VC’s sister who strangely won the contract to feed them at the battlefields of the University would make money. When SYNES UB branch indicated in their communiqué that the VC was unwilling to stop the strike, the naïve did not see this link! Rather, sadly, for the scheme, the visit of the Minister of Higher Education burst the bubble because there were no guerrillas of the SCNC or from the Northwest in sight.

We are told that a list of about 16 mostly Graffis and SYNES members at UB have been prepared for either elimination by thugs already imported for the purpose or the sack. The DVC Research, Prof. Emmanuel Chia, as well as one of the most dynamic deans on campus are heading this list.

The misfortune in the whole of this is that no one seems to consider the repercussions that is certain to ensue, if the threat is carried through. Are we so naive to assume that the Graffis will sit idly by while their elite sons are liquidated in UB? Or, perhaps, the naivety is attributable to the idea that the Graffis are so populous that they will not notice the elimination of a few of their children?

It may be recalled that in a speech replete with provocative extremism by the VC and published in *The Post* of June 6, 2005, it was asserted thus: "It is a shame that so-called Anglo-Saxon values which we are supposed to cultivate at the University of Buea are being turned upside down by some teachers with the complicity of some parents. It is certainly not in the Anglo-Saxon tradition for students to refuse to dialogue... It is common knowledge that members of SYNES UB have contributed little or nothing to make the University of Buea beautiful. Rather, they have continued to nurture a culture of lawlessness through their persistent defiance of authority and by instigating students to riot and to destroy..."

As a sit-tight leader, one expects the VC to be incensed by the call by SYNES UB for her to resign over her inability to resolve the strike, yet find her allusions to Anglo-Saxon values at UB embarrassing.

The refusal to dialogue may or may not be Anglo-Saxon, but how a woman who has hung on to her position as VC for over 13 years in total defiance of the decree creating the University of Buea finds the moral authority to yarn about Anglo-Saxon values and lawlessness is truly incredible.

Is respect of the law creating an institution like UB not a basic Anglo-Saxon tenet? Rather than accuse SYNES UB of lawlessness, the VC should address the outrageous lawlessness of her tenure. It is rational to assume that the lawlessness that permeates the appointment of the leadership of UB would inevitably be transmitted downward and not otherwise.

The contempt for a plurality of thought and opinion at UB is demonstrated in the University's hatred for SYNES as shown in her speech above and refusal to recognise an independent student union body, in spite of the advice of her boss, the Minister of Higher Education.

This is not Anglo-Saxon, but rather an oppressive method of managing a university, which is bound to fail because times have changed and things must change either peacefully or through strikes. Regardless of the nostalgia for the one-party style of managing universities under the Ahidjo era, a

management style where threats are issued to students to go to class or be dismissed can no longer be sustained in UB. Nor, would the University afford to revert to the era of banning courses (as some have suggested) such as political science because of their so-called potential for subversion.

It is ludicrous to say that SYNES UB has not contributed to the beauty of the University when the school once placed members of this union on mission to Yaounde to source for credit and this, they successfully did to the relief of all and sundry.

SYNES members, it may be recalled, teach courses, supervise research projects and publish in standard journals. Is it being suggested by this assertion that only those who issue contracts to their kith and kin at UB are contributing to the beauty of the University?

One would naturally sympathise with the VC's pathetic position at UB, particularly as she noted in her speech: "anyone who comes near the Vice-Chancellor is an enemy to the rest of the staff." But has she asked herself why?

Isn't that to be expected when she maintains a network of spies, attempts to sack staff who do not agree with her, suspends the salaries of scores of lecturers who are away on study leave, etc.? Can one sow bitterness and hate but expect to reap peace and love?

At what point would the cherished Anglo-Saxon tradition of resigning when things become untenable as they seem to be the case at UB be considered? The choices remain hers.

June 16, 2005 at 02:04 PM in [Commentary](#) | [Permalink](#)

Njeuma Quits UB, 12 Years After

By Fidelis Pegue Manga

A September 10, Presidential Decree appointing, transferring and dismissing heads of state-owned Universities finally took away Dr. Dorothy Limunga Njeuma from the helm of the University of Buea, UB, which she has headed since 1988. Dr. Njeuma was redeployed to serve as Rector of Yaounde University I.

She will be replaced as VC of the beleaguered UB, by Professor Cornelius Mbifung Lambi, hitherto Dean of the Faculty of Social and Management Sciences in the same institution.

President Biya also appointed Anacleto Fomete to replace Prof. Jean-Louis Dongmo as new Rector for Dschang. The biggest casualty was Prof. Sammy Beban Chumbow, dropped as Rector of the University of Yaounde I.

Prof. Bruno Bekolo Ebe was maintained as Rector of the University of Douala. Prof. Jean Tabi Manga and Paul Henri Amvam Zollo of the Universities of Yaounde II and Ngaoundere respectively also kept their posts.

Recalling the Old Guards

Biya also brought in a clutch of old guards to serve as Pro-Chancellor and Board Chairmen in the various universities. One time Minister of Higher Education, Prof. Peter Agbor Tabi, replaced Prof. Victor Anomah Ngu as Pro-Chancellor of the University.

Former Communication Minister, Prof. Augustin Kontchou Kouomegni, will now serve as Board Chairman of the University of Douala. Hamadjoda Adjoudji, erstwhile Minister of Livestock, Fisheries and Animal Husbandry, is Board Chairman of the University of Ngaoundere. David Abouem à Tchoyi, himself a one-time Minister of Higher Education, was appointed Board Chairman of the University of Yaounde I. Jean Akame Fouman is Board Chairman of the University of Yaounde II. Francis Nkwain, one time Minister Delegate, was also named to be Board Chairman of the University of Dschang.

Tumultuous Outburst

After the upheavals that rocked the Universities, it was evident that heads would roll. The only question was when? That is why there was a tumultuous outburst of joy in the streets of Molyko, Buea, following the appointment of Prof. Lambi.

A huge crowd, made up of mostly students, took to the streets, shortly after the appointments were read on radio, celebrating. They sang anti-Njeuma slogans and hailed the new Vice Chancellor. Thereafter, they marched to the home of Prof. Lambi to congratulate him.

Even lecturers were not indifferent. A female lecturer chanted: "Management Science Oyé, Management Science Oyé." One of the lecturers said, "the thing has come to our house this time."

In a small corner of the new Vice Chancellor's compound, lecturers and other staffers of UB brooded on the future of UB. Talking to the crowd that had thronged his residence, Prof. Lambi said, "Today is a memorable day in my University career. I'm very delighted with my appointment by the Head of State. I shall, in the light of my predecessor, try to make UB conducive for academic excellence."

Addressing a surging crowd of students who stormed his Bomaka residence chanting songs, Lambi told them tersely, "I'll work with all of you." The applause was deafening.

UBSU Congratulate New VC, Biya.

In a quick reaction to the appointment, the putative and nascent University of Buea Students Union, UBSU, September 11, addressed a message of congratulation to Prof. Lambi. "We the students of the University Buea, represented by UBSU, find it relieving to congratulate you on your timely appointment as the second Vice Chancellor of the University of Buea," the release signed by Walters Onekon Angwere, UBSU President, stated. UBSU pledged to cooperate with the new Vice Chancellor and his team.

Another letter, still signed by Onekon, congratulated and expressed unflinching support for the Head of State, Paul Biya. Onekon hoped the instilment of a serene atmosphere in the University milieu would figure prominently in the agenda of Biya's greater achievements programme.

Onekon later told *The Post* that they hoped the replacement of the Vice Chancellor will usher a period of dialogue between the University authorities and the student body. One of the students' demands during the strike that lasted one month and resulted in the deaths of three people, two of them students, was the sacking of the Vice Chancellor. The students consider Dr. Njeuma's transfer as a conciliatory move by President Paul Biya to ensure a peaceful start of the 2005/2006 academic year which is only weeks away.

Before her transfer, Dr. Njeuma had been Vice Chancellor of the University of Buea since its inception 12 years ago. But things began turning sour for the Vice Chancellor during the last wave of protests in the University. Of late, tension began mounting again following a decision by the University Senate to cancel the traditional Convocation ceremony for graduating students.

The Vice Chancellor said in a recent press conference that the students were academically qualified but morally unfit to be summoned for

Convocation. The University Senate also ruled out the possibility of all the courses featuring in the institution's re-sit examination, even though this was one of the points in a memo Prof. Jacques Fame Ndongo, Cameroon's Higher Education Minister, signed with the students on May 27 ending the strike.

The Vice Chancellor had described the memo as a smokescreen to save the academic year. This prompted the students to petition President Biya, threatening to disrupt the academic year. However, Dr. Njeuma has been given an apparently bigger charge at the University of Yaounde I, with a population of over 30,000 students compared to Buea, which has 8600 students.

Other Changes in UB

The Presidential Decree also appointed Dr. Victor Julius Ngoh, hitherto Dean of the Faculty of Arts, as new Registrar. Former Registrar, Herbert Nganjo Endeley, is now Deputy Vice Chancellor In Charge of Research. Dr. Nalova Lyonga is now Deputy Vice Chancellor In Charge of Teaching. Prof. Emmanuel Chia and Vincent Titanji, both Deputy Vice Chancellors, have been dropped. Dr. John Ebanja was maintained as Deputy Vice Chancellor In Charge of Control. Prof. Paul Mbangwana of the University of Yaounde was appointed Dean of UB's Faculty of Arts. Dr. Martha Tumnde heads the Faculty of Social and Management Sciences.

Speaking to The Post, Chief Professor Samson Negbo Abangma, one time Deputy Vice Chancellor for UB said Prof. Lambi is equal to the job. "I am very sure he is going to be his own man. He should have a cool head," he said. I know him very well and he has been managing the Faculty of Social and Management Sciences of the University of Buea. We think he has been doing an excellent job," Abangma said.

Six Years or so after the Strike

As at September 10, 2005, Presidential Decree appointing, transferring and dismissing heads of state-owned Universities finally took away Dr. Dorothy Limunga Njeuma from the helm of the University of Buea, UB, which she has headed since 1988. Dr. Njeuma was redeployed to serve as Rector of Yaounde University I while Professor Cornelius Mbifung Lambi,

hitherto Dean of the Faculty of Social and Management Sciences in the same institution took over the reins of power.

In the same vein, President Biya also appointed Anacleto Fomete to replace Prof. Jean-Louis Dongmo as new Rector for Dschang while Prof. Sammy Beban Chumbow was dropped as Rector of the University of Yaounde I and Prof. Bruno Bekolo Ebe was maintained as Rector of the University of Douala. Prof. Jean Tabi Manga and Paul Henri Amvam Zollo of the Universities of Yaounde II and Ngaoundere respectively also kept their posts.

Biya's Decree also brought in a clutch of old guards to serve as Pro-Chancellor and Board Chairmen in the various universities. One time Minister of Higher Education, Prof. Peter Agbor Tabi, replaced Prof. Victor Anomah Ngu as Pro-Chancellor of the University of the University of Buea.

Former Communication Minister, Prof. Augustin Kontchou Kouomegni, was appointed to serve as Board Chairman of the University of Douala and Hamadjoda Adjoudji, erstwhile Minister of Livestock, Fisheries and Animal Husbandry, was appointed the Board Chairman of the University of Ngaoundere. David Abouem ä Tchoyi, himself a one-time Minister of Higher Education, was appointed Board Chairman of the University of Yaounde I.

As it has been said elsewhere in this book, after the upheavals that rocked the Universities, it was evident that heads would roll and the above paragraphs have just exemplified that fact. In Buea the news of the fall of the VC came like a sign of great relief to the students and the staff of the University of Buea. That news was accompanied by a tumultuous frenzy and outburst of joy in the streets of Molyko, Buea, following the appointment of Prof. Lambi to enter into the shoes of Dr. Njeuma. A huge crowd, made up of mostly students, took to the streets, shortly after the appointments were read on radio, celebrating. They sang anti-Njeuma slogans and hailed the new Vice Chancellor. Thereafter, they marched to the home of Prof. Lambi to congratulate him.

Even lecturers were not indifferent. A female lecturer chanted: "Management Science Oyé, Management Science Oyé." One of the lecturers said, "the thing has come to our house this time." In a small corner of the new Vice Chancellor's compound, lecturers and other staffers of UB brooded on the future of UB. Talking to the crowd that had thronged his residence, Prof. Lambi said, "Today is a memorable day in my University

career. I'm very delighted with my appointment by the Head of State. I shall, in the light of my predecessor, try to make UB conducive for academic excellence."

Addressing a surging crowd of students who stormed his Bomaka residence chanting songs, Lambi told them tersely, "I'll work with all of you." The applause was deafening. UBSU Congratulate their new VC.

UBSU took the rostrum

In a quick reaction to the appointment, the putative and nascent University of Buea Students Union, UBSU, September 11, addressed a message of congratulation to Prof. Lambi. "We the students of the University Buea, represented by UBSU, find it relieving to congratulate you on your timely appointment as the second Vice Chancellor of the University of Buea," the release signed by Walters Onekon Angwere, UBSU President, stated. UBSU pledged to cooperate with the new Vice Chancellor and his team.

Another letter, still signed by Onekon, congratulated and expressed unflinching support for the Head of State, Paul Biya. Onekon hoped the instalment of a serene atmosphere in the University milieu would figure prominently in the agenda of Biya's greater achievements programme. Onekon later told *The Past* that they hoped the replacement of the Vice Chancellor will usher a period of dialogue between the University authorities and the student body. One of the students' demands during the strike that lasted one month and resulted in the deaths of three people, two of them students, was the sacking of the Vice Chancellor. The students consider Dr. Njeuma's transfer as a conciliatory move by President Paul Biya to ensure a peaceful start of the 2005/2006 academic year which is only weeks away.

The Presidential Decree also appointed Dr. Victor Julius Ngoh, hitherto Dean of the Faculty of Arts, as new Registrar. Former Registrar, Herbert Nganjo Endeley, is now Deputy Vice Chancellor In charge of Research. Dr. Nalova Lyonga is now Deputy Vice Chancellor In Charge of Teaching. Prof. Emmanuel Chia and Vincent Titanji, both Deputy Vice Chancellors, have been dropped. Dr. John Ebanja was maintained as Deputy Vice Chancellor In Charge of Control. Prof. Paul Mbangwana of the University of Yaounde was appointed Dean of University of Buea's, Faculty of Arts. Dr. Martha Tumnde heads the Faculty of Social and Management Sciences. The circle of

appointments and re-appointments had turned full circumference in Buea and other state Universities.

If one read the appointments and transfers done following the students riots, it is difficult to extrapolate it from some of the demands of the students especially the Buea students. In other for the government not to make as if the transfers were forced down on her by the students it was expedient on her to do so with other people in state University. One has to see the appointments and transfer made by President through the lenses of his unpredictability in his predictability. One hidden agenda which was clear to the new and old University icons was the peace should reign at all costs. Consequently, the rectors had to chart a new path towards their administration.

Lambi and the new “open door policy”

The dust of euphoria which appeared to have caught all and sundry with regards to the appointment of Professor Lambi had hardly settled down as he defined his policy. This was largely known as “open door policy” which to him meant that the VC chancellor’s office was opened to all the students and staff at all times. In defining such a policy, it was against the “iron fist” policy of his predecessor where neither students nor staff found it practically easy to enter the office. The VC’s office was a ‘no-fly-zone’. He, (Lambi), showed his ‘simplicity’ by even disregarding the normal tight protocol that had surrounded Dr. Njeuma for more than a decade. He had become indeed a man of the people.

His simplicity was matched by giving room to students especially the newly born UBSU. This meant that the romance between the students and the VC was that of ‘horse riding’. Yet the excesses were to turn the tables as events not directly involving the strike were to pull the rug under Prof. Lambi. One of those events was the granting of medical school to the Buea University.

Medical Examination and the exit of Lambi

Professor Lambi’s tenure as the Vice Chancellor of the University of Buea lasted a little less than fifteen months. During this period there was relative calm in the campus and cronies and supporters enjoyed some relative

advantages. Of course they were closer to the plumb tree on which Prof Lambi was on top to harvest the black ones. However, following the government's modernisation policy of state universities, the President signed a Decree creating a medical school in the Universities of Buea and Douala amongst the others. To qualify for admission into the medical school prospective students were required to write a competitive examination. It was on the basis of succeeding in the competitive exams that any student was qualified to be admitted.

The situation in Buea was quite different. The examination was conducted and the results proclaimed with the VC chancellor signing it. When he sent the results to Yaounde, they were rejected on the grounds that the VC had no right to pontificate the results. As a result of this the minister and his crew added another dimension by out rightly rejecting the list and adding francophone students who had not even sat for the exams nor succeeded and instead reducing the list by winnowing out some of the Anglophone students who had succeeded in the competitive examination. This indicated directly or indirectly, that meritocracy had been sacrificed on alter of mediocrity.

When the list was pasted it caused another student strike. This time UBSU was bent that the list must be withdrawn. The list was never withdrawn but when the students mobilized for another strike the results were visibly predictable. At 1:00pm the Cameroon Radio and Television (CRTV) news headlines came ringing. Professor Lambi as VC of the Buea University had been dropped and Professor P.K. Titanji was brought back from his limbo to take charge of the affairs of Buea University henceforth. Before we visit Prof. P.K. Titanji's administration it was imperative to see how the government defended her action.

Regional Balance

To defend her position the government evoked a nebulous and bizarre policy which she called regional balance. According to such a policy, everybody and region had to contribute a quarter of her students to the medical school. This appeared that it was only to affect Buea as the medical exams in other schools like in Douala never kept the regional balance close to the chest. Consequently the regional policy was largely a political smoke screen used by the government to do what was wrong. Whatever the case the

medical school and exams sent professor Lambi “on his travels” and Professor Titanji came in.

Professor P.K. Titanji at the helm of UB affairs

From all purpose and intents, it was clear that Prof Lambi had been dropped because of the skirmishes that had emanated as a result of the medical examination and admission. Top on the agenda of Prof. Titanji was to appease the students at all cost. His reign therefore has been characterized by romancing with UBSU and the entire student body in other wave off any impending strike. In an attempt to appease the students and UBSU it appeared that UBSU took power into their hands and more or less dictated to the VC and administration.

Students’ insolence reached abnormal proportions

The powers that were given to UBSU and the rest of the students was misunderstood. The students felt that they were above the university regulations and so could even dictate to the staff. Students saw the VC as their protégé and whatever a student did that was wrong, the said student saw the VC as somebody who will protect them. This was unacceptable.

This did not go on without reasons. The appointment of Prof. P.K. Titanji, was not welcomed by those who were to work with him. One reason was that they had been eyeing the seat of the VC. Another reason was that these detractors appeared to be regionalists to the core and so believed that it was not the place of another North westerner to hold the reins of power. To them it was the turn of the South westerner. To counter and frustrate Prof. Titanji’s administration, it was rumoured on campus that these detractors were sponsoring some students to terrorized other students and even teachers who belonged to the camp of the VC. These set of students were quite insolent to their colleagues and their staff.

The dressing code which the university under Dr. Njeuma’s administration had implemented and made sure that it was rigorously followed became now an empty rhetoric. Students both girls and boys dressed in very absurd and unkempt manner. The National Syndicate of Teachers of Higher Education (SYNES)-University of Buea chapter stepped in to put things in order.

SYNES-Buea Chapter Strike (28 Feb.-5 March 2012)

Although SYNES called an outright strike on the 28th Feb. 2012 it is imperative to note that the unruly nature of the students had earlier led to the union threatening to hold re-sit examinations for September 2011. For that reasons the re-sit examination took more time than ever expected and help to slow the university calendar of activities.

Although the re-sit examination finally took place it was not long that SYNES threatened the University community and the Minister of Higher Education. At that time their demands were more than handling the students since to a large extent it was considered that the students had learnt their lessons and were of good behaviour ‘this time around’. Consequently, SYNES, Buea took advantage to put grievances that were affecting the work of teachers in Buea University.

To hold the administration ‘on their balls’ SYNES planned to disrupt the exams if the University administration did not comply to their demands as per the text creating the University. Therefore the planned of end-of – semester examinations which was to take place on the 1st of March 2012 largely did not hold. The grievances of the SYNES were embodied in a press release that read as follows:

We, the University of Buea Lecturers’ Union (SYNES), wish to inform our students and the entire Cameroonian people of an urgent concern that has led us to reluctantly call an indefinite strike action that may affect the forthcoming examinations.

According to the decree setting up the University, Heads of Departments, Deans and the Vice-Chancellor are supposed to be elected by lecturers:

ART.54. (a): *The Faculty board shall in a prescribed manner, from time to time, elect one of the Professors of the Faculty to be Dean. In the absence of a Professor, an Associate Professor shall be elected in like manner. The person so elected shall upon approval by Senate and confirmation by decree hold office for a period of three years renewable once. He shall have the rank of Director in the Central administration.*

ART. 74 (c): *The Head of Department shall be appointed by the Minister in charge of Higher Education upon the recommendation of the Vice-Chancellor and the Faculty Board in confirmation of the assembly of the Department, sitting without the participation of students. He shall have the rank of sub-director in the Central administration.*

These provisions read alongside the spirit of section 2 (2) of the Constitution of the Republic 2008 requiring that authorities responsible for the management of the state and its institution derive their power from the people through elections.

Based on the above and at this stage of our country's democratic evolution, we lecturers of the University of Buea hereby state our resolve to see to the implementation of the statutes and will only accept that the Minister confirms officials as elected by their peers. In an era where good governance is the stock in trade, where even students elect their leaders and representatives, it is demeaning for university officials to be appointed when the statutes say the contrary.

We pray government and the entire Cameroonian people to support our legitimate aspiration to elect these officials as our Anglo-Saxon culture and tradition requires. We are humbly appealing that a time-table be approved for these elections to take place without which lecturers at the University of Buea shall embark on an infinite strike action.

Done in Buea, this Monday the 27 day of February

Signed by: Prof. Michael A. Yanou (President)

Dr. James Abagma (Vice President)

Dr. Fontem A. Neba (Secretary)

Coming on the eve of a planned-end-of –semester examinations, the press release of SYNES caught the administration and the Ministry as a hypodermic injection. Fear and frustration was near the university administration. To forestall the strike, the administration down looked the SYNES call for a strike and put up the examination timetable to start on the 1st of March 2012. Unfortunately, for the administration, the expediency did not work as SYNES held tight their own end of the robe. When the schedule examination failed to take off the ground the VC convoked the staff and SYNES for a dialogue.

The VC sent out letter No.2012/0046/UB/VC of 2nd March 2012, to all the teaching staff copying the DVCs, REG, Deans, Directors and HOEs. The letter read *inter alia*: *All members of Academic Staff are cordially invited to a meeting in the Amphitheatre 250 on Friday, 2012 at 11: 00. The presence of everyone is mandatory.*

Signed:

Professor Vincent P.K. Titanji,

Vice-Chancellor.

The meetings of 2nd March 2012

The meeting called by the VC received a massive turn out by the staff and SYNES members. The sole agenda of the meeting was to dialogue with SYNES and see how SYNES could call off the strike. The VC read out the obvious-the text that created the University of Buea. All and sundry knew the text but there was no need reading all over again

It appeared that it was read to inform the staff as well as SYNES that the text had undergone changes since it was enacted. This was embarrassing to SYNES members as they knew that the law had never been revoked. SYNES had sent an earlier letter to the minister of higher education regarding their grievances. The VC explained that he had forwarded the letter to the minister.

The administration even in the heat of all this was foolhardy as ever before. An examination timetable was put up. This was to make students understand that all was ok. Unfortunately, the said timetable was never respected as the SYNES, convened another emergent meeting immediately the one with the VC was over. In that short and brief meeting, SYNES resolved not to start the exams until it was clear that something fruitful came out from their grievances. They had already made an appointment with the Minister of Higher Education, Prof. Jacques Fame Ndongo. One important thing in the meeting was who will go to Yaounde to meet the minister. It was not a serious problem as men and women were quick to Volunteer to Yaounde.

SYNES and the Minister of Higher Education in Yaounde, 6 March 2012

The meeting in Yaounde with the minister had to resolve the demands of SYNES. The meeting seemed to have gone on smoothly as on the 7th of March 2012, following letter No. 12005/MINESUP/SG/DPDSU titled **ANNOUNCEMENT** from the Ministry of Higher Education read as follows:

Within the framework of the consolidation of Republican dialogue, a major segment of the New University Governance prescribed by the President of the Republic, Head of State, as applied by the Prime Minister, Head of Government, the Minister of Higher Education informs the national public opinion that surrounded by his close collaborators, he presided

over a working session with the executive of the Buea Chapter of National Union of Higher Education Teachers (SYNES) on the 6th of March 2012 in Room 1036 of his Ministerial department following the strike action of the said Union in the University of Buea.

Discussions touched on the following points:

- the sabbatical leave of Higher Education teachers;*
- access to high ranking academic posts of responsibility;*
- the role of teachers in this process*

At the end of the working session, considering the conclusions of the meeting presided over by the Vice-Chancellor of the University of Buea on the 5th of March 2012 in the presence of the various parties concerned, it was consensually agreed that:

1-the modalities of the sabbatical leave will be worked out and implemented by the University of Buea not only in respect of rules in force but also in respect of University practices while the designation procedure to academic posts of responsibility shall be examined in due course after thorough examination of the dynamics of the issue;

2-the strike action in the University of Buea is called off;

3-first semester examinations be scheduled on Thursday March 08, 2012

Done in Yaounde, this 06th of March 2012

The Minister of Higher Education
Jacques FAME NDONGO

The announcement from the office of the Minister showed that the SYNES strike had scored major victory. It was time therefore for the semester examination to take place. One of the striking issues which came out from the SYNES strike was that it was the first time in the history of the university when examination were disrupted by the teaching staff.

Conclusion

The epilogue has documented the comments of various people on various aspects of the strike and on the effects of this strike on their personal lives. It has also described the effects of the strike on the administration of the UB and other universities in the country as well as on the students' union.

It has also related the recent actions of the university teachers' union, the SYNES, aiming at an improvement of their conditions of service.

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Faced with a deepening crisis in their universities, African students have demonstrated a growing activism and militancy. They have been engaged in numerous, often violent, strikes for improvements in their deteriorating living and study conditions and the introduction of a democratic culture in the universities and society as a whole, including the right to express their views, organise in student unions and participate in university management. This book focuses on a recent violent strike action in Cameroon's state universities, with special attention to the University of Buea – the only English-speaking university in the country between 1993 and 2011. Such a detailed study on student strikes is still rare in African studies, and maybe even more important, this book pays special attention to certain elements that have been of great significance to the strike but are often overlooked in narratives of other student actions in Africa, namely the use of cell phones, differences in gender roles of student activists, the religious dimensions of the strike, the central role of some public spaces like bars and cafés for the planning and execution of student strikes, and the power of the photocopier. The book goes far beyond simply documenting the various protest actions of students against the state and university authorities. It also provides ample room for comments from journalists and other civil-society members and groups on various aspects of the strike.

* * *

FRANCIS B. NYAMNJOH is Professor of Social Anthropology at the University of Cape Town, South Africa. He headed the Department of Sociology and Anthropology at the University of Buea, Cameroon, from 1993 – 1999.

WALTER GAM NKWI is Senior Lecturer at the Department of History, University of Buea, Cameroon.

PIET KONINGS is Senior Researcher at the African Studies Centre Leiden, The Netherlands. He has written and published extensively on various aspects of society in Cameroon, including higher education, democratisation and civil society movements.



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